

HERMIONE,

OR THE

ORPHAN SISTERS.

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON.

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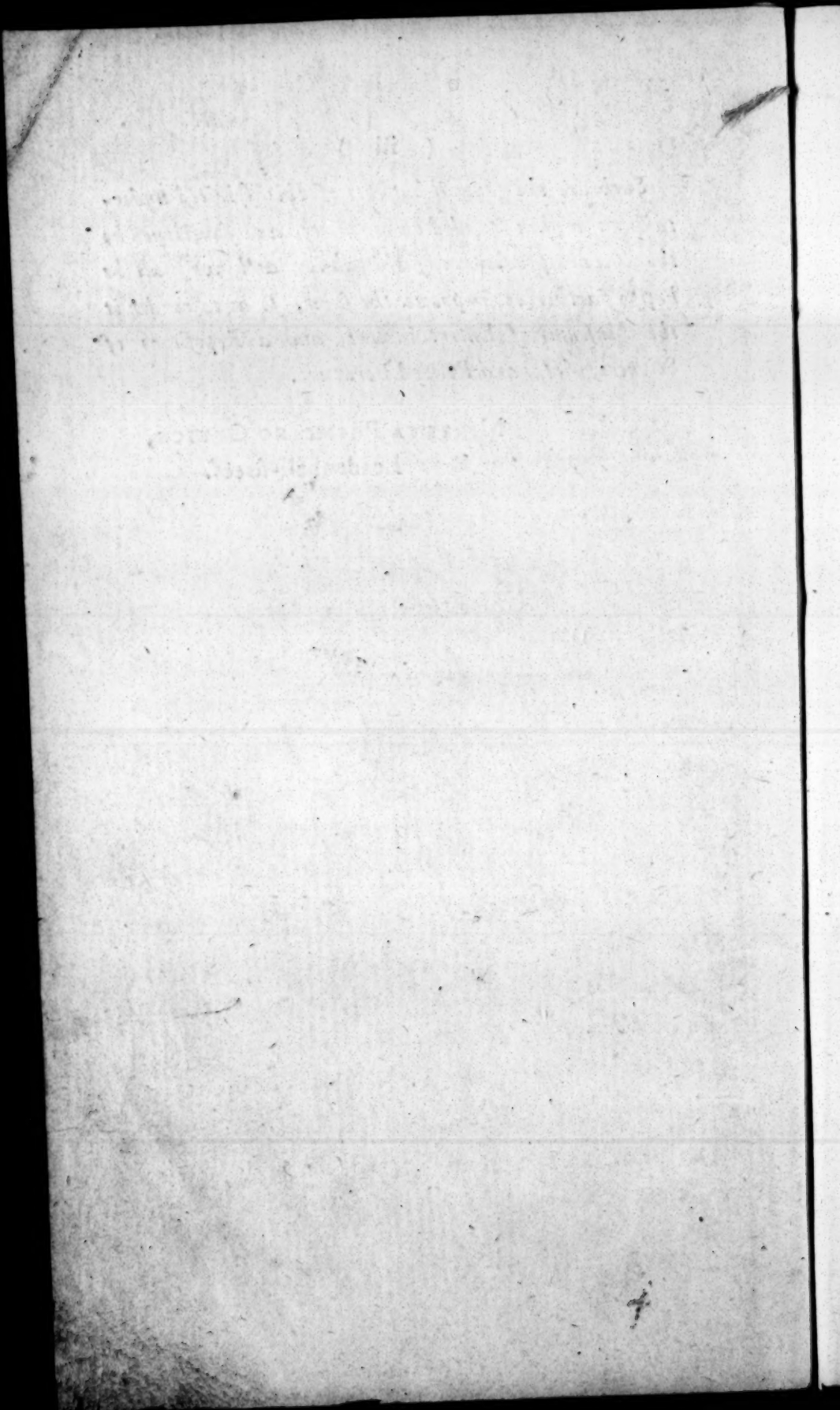
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MINERVA PRINTING OFFICE,
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From F. Richards

HERMIONE.

Q

LETTER I.

Liphin

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

August —

AFTER a dreadful interval of four dismal weeks, I am once more enabled to resume my pen. Your friendly letter of condolence reached me last night. How soothing, my Sophia, is the balm of sympathy to a mind wounded by affliction. Your kind expressions made me dissolve into tears; but they were tears of softness and relief, far different from those of bitterness and despair, of which lately I have shed so many.

I admit of all you say, my dear; but reasoning, however solid and convincing, rarely makes any impression in the first

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stages

flages of immoderate sorrow, and I acknowledge the justice without feeling the force of the consolation you would inspire. I know we have enjoyed our beloved parent to a more advanced period than, from his feeble constitution and emaciated frame, we had cause to hope, and that we ought not now to repine that it has pleased the Almighty to take him from us; since every year of the last three of his life, has appeared in the light of a lease from heaven hardly to be expected, and at certain seasons, almost hardly to be wished; but for some months previous to his death, he had been blessed with such unusual good health, that all our former fears were lulled into fatal security, and I cherished with delight the pleasing idea of possessing him even in old age, and of devoting my days to render the remainder of his life comfortable and happy.

I do not however give uncontrouled
scope

scope to my grief, as you tell me you are convinced is the case: I do not complain that the sudden shock of this sad stroke made it perhaps overpower us with redoubled violence; on the contrary, I bless heaven that the sufferings were *ours* not my dear father's, and that his transition to a better world seemed to all appearance unattended by those painful struggles and agonies which in general render the awful close of life still more dreadful, both to those who endure and to those who behold it.

Oh my beloved friend! it is not his loss (though God only knows how severe) that lies with such a weight of misery on our minds: ah no, Sophia; to the inevitable stroke of death our dearest interests remain every instant exposed; and dreadful as is the blow, resignation, assisted by time, especially in the sanguine season of youth, seldom I believe fails in restoring tranquillity. Long

and deeply must we have mourned our irreparable misfortune: yet I know I am not formed different from the rest of mankind, and what millions are doomed to endure, I am conscious I might have been enabled to support; but our distresses are accumulated, and beyond measure severe: not merely have we been deprived of a parent tender and revered, but to this calamity, of itself almost sufficient to overpower human nature, is superadded the agonizing aggravation of knowing that his best days have been overclouded by secret and acute sufferings—sufferings which have corroded his mind, undermined his constitution, and to which he has at length yielded himself a prey; yes, my Sophia, that ever honoured parent, whom we revered with enthusiastic affection, was a victim to remorse, and died of that most painful of all distempers—that distemper which admits of no cure, and
bids

bids defiance to human skill—a broken heart.

His death, ever to be lamented, has brought to light a fatal, fatal story; but I shall endeavour to enter upon it with what composure I can summon to my aid; and from the soothing relief of confidential communication, perhaps my sorrows may derive some alleviation.

After being seized with the fit which proved, in its consequences, so dreadful, a short interval of ease succeeded, which my sister and I, unused to scenes of this alarming nature, vainly regarded as the certain symptom of recovery; but my father, who felt himself inwardly gone, perceived with pain our delusive error. My dear girls, said he, in a voice, ah! how exhausted! you must endeavour to reconcile yourselves to the shock which awaits you: the will of heaven must not only be obeyed, in that we have neither choice nor merit, but it must be obeyed

with submission and without a murmur. The Almighty is about to deprive you, as you must at present imagine, of your only surviving parent; but know, another yet remains, who, I trust, will be prevailed with, after I am gone, to supply the place and fulfil the duties of a father.

To this solemn address, which seemed to annihilate my senses, I was unable to reply; but Fanny's feelings found vent in tears. She burst into an agony of grief—oh dearest papa, cried she, who upon earth can to us supply your place? when you leave us, we shall be alone in the world; no one cares for us, no one loves us, we have no friend but you.

For the sake of heaven compose yourselves, my dearest children, replied my father. I leave you neither unprotected nor unfriended; and severe as is the first early stroke to youthful and susceptible hearts, a little time I hope will abate the poignancy of your regret; but the present

sent moments, added he, after a short pause, are unspeakably precious. Let Howard be sent for in all haste; tell him to make all the expedition in his power, and inform him that I expect, from his faithful attachment, the most painful, though most necessary offices of friendship—that he will close my eyes and receive my last injunctions. A messenger was instantly dispatched. Mr. Howard was at Clarence, whither he had gone but the evening before, having left my father in perfect health. He travelled with the utmost haste; yet the few hours that elapsed before he appeared, to us seemed an age. My father, though the dreadful symptoms of approaching dissolution rapidly increased, still retained his senses unimpaired; and on being informed that his friend was in the house, he expressed his gratitude to heaven that he had not breathed his last sigh without seeing him, and desired that he might

be instantly introduced into his bed chamber.

On his entrance, Mr. Howard found my sister, whom no entreaties could persuade to leave the room, vainly striving to suppress sobs, which the apprehension of too violently affecting our dying parent obliged her to endeavour, though ineffectually, to restrain. My feelings, alas ! were such as admitted not of the relief of tears ; the stupor of despair had benumbed every faculty. I was alive only to the sensations of misery ; and concealed by the curtains, I kneeled at the side of the bed, offering up silent petitions for that recovery, of which I had now lost the most distant hope. My father, after expressing his satisfaction on seeing Mr. Howard, desired the physician, and all, excepting that worthy friend, my sister and myself, should leave the room. This request being instantly complied with, he besought Mr. Howard

ard to open a bureau which stood in the chamber: you will there find a manuscript, said he, dated some years ago, and written by my own hand: this manuscript, my dear girls, (addressing himself to us) contains a horrid tale, which I could wish were for ever buried with me in the grave; but as it is essentially necessary that your real situation in life should be made known to you at my death, when, exposed to the dangers and difficulties of a world with which you are totally unacquainted, the protection of your relations must be peculiarly important, I have considered it as a duty incumbent on me, to leave behind an impartial relation of that series of misfortunes, that checquered train of evils, which have rendered me an alien from my family, an exile from my country, and have long banished comfort and tranquillity from my bosom. So oppressed was his articulation, and so feeble his voice, that our

dear father did not finish the speech without many interruptions from weakness and fatigue, and the last words half died upon his lips; but having a little recovered himself—you, my dear friend, said he to Mr. Howard, will I hope afford my girls consolation and support under the pain of this severe and unexpected communication. To your care I bequeath them. See them safe under the protection of Bensley or my father; represent to them, when they are able to listen to comfort, that my penitence has been almost proportioned to my crimes; and ah, my dear Howard! if possible detest not the miserable author of calamities, the guilt of which, fifteen long years of remorse have, I trust, obliterated from the records of heaven.

Sophia, what were at that moment my sensations? Is it in language to express them? Ah, no! they were inconceivable and unutterable! I felt there
was

was yet an agony superior to that of losing all that is dearest to us on earth; and while distraction drew an exclamation of despair from my sister, horror benumbed my senses; and I sunk lifeless on the floor.

When my recollection was restored, I found myself in bed in my own apartment. The transports of Fanny's grief, and the gloomy silence of Thérèse, and the physician who attended me, too evidently told that all was over with my dear father. Exhausted with the exertion of speaking, he had breathed his last sigh almost in the instant that I was carried out of his chamber.

You, my Sophia, who are happily blessed with beloved and indulgent parents, may be perhaps enabled to form some idea adequate to the distraction a loss like ours must have occasioned: yet, yet, my dear, this was not all; an awful obscurity seemed to envelope some
hidden

hidden source of unknown and additional misery. We were filled with horror inconceivable. To part with our dearest father at that instant, seemed an evil inferior to knowing he had lived with a load of anguish on his conscience; and anxiously as we wished, we yet dreaded ten thousand times more to have the fearful mystery explained.

After a night of acute distress, sleep kindly came to our relief, and buried us for about an hour in a blessed state of forgetfulness; yet even in slumber, a melancholy gloom pervaded our repose, and we awoke only sufficiently recruited to be able to weep.

We were then visited by Mr. Howard, who sympathized in our sufferings with a degree of feeling that must for ever endear him to our hearts. Ah, Mr. Howard! cried I, the moment I could articulate for my tears—where, where are those fatal papers of my dear, dear father's,

ther's, which have been intrusted to your care? have you yourself perused them? Tell me, for heaven's sake! are the contents too horrible—are they such as we shall be able to read and not expose.

I will not attempt to conceal from you, said he, with the tenderest compassion, though not without hesitation, that they are of such a nature as must both hurt and affect you; yet there are mingled in this distressing narrative, so many alleviating circumstances to soften censure and silence condemnation, that I hope the communication will shock neither of you too severely, when you are in a situation to receive the information with more composure than it can be supposed you at present possess.

Oh! cried Fanny, can any thing augment our present misery? or if that were indeed possible, must not suspense more effectually add to it than any intelligence we can now receive? I was in hopes of
having

having time granted me, said he, to soften the communication by degrees; but since you are so violently alarmed, I believe any certainty is almost preferable to your present state of suspense. I shall therefore bring you the packet; I only entreat that you will allow me, before you open it, the favour of one half hour's conversation, that I may be satisfied I do not commit too great an imprudence in venturing to intrust you with it.

This worthy man then began to hint at its contents; but in spite of all his endeavours to palliate and soften the sad recital, the shock entirely overpowered us; yet I insisted on knowing all; and breathless with terror, received the dreadful manuscript from his hands.

Let me make but one observation, cried he, on delivering it: the years of self reproach and anguish, which succeeded to your father's errors, so pathetically

tically described by himself, more than atone for his faults. This penitence, his deep felt sense of every breach of duty, and the unerring rectitude of his mind and conduct the instant he was awakened from the delirium of passion, even convince me there was inherent in his bosom, a secret sentiment of superior virtue, which, however obscured and suppressed by the force of misguided feelings and the violence of temptation, required but the moment of remorse to expand and once more fully regain its influence over his actions.

What misery my sister and I endured from the melancholy narration, and the tears we shed over it, you, my Sophia, when you have perused the packet transcribed by Mr. Howard, which accompanies this, may be almost enabled to conceive: a tedious and severe illness, from which I am still but feebly recovered,

vered, was the natural and inevitable consequence of such a conflict of emotions.

It is not, I own, without a sensation of repugnance, that I prevail with myself to send you this dismal tale; but alas! so public has been every circumstance of my father's misfortunes (those which greatly extenuate his errors excepted) that I have reason to believe even you, my dear, have often heard of the miserable fate of Lord Linrose, as a remarkable event that took place in a family of distinction, and made much noise in the world some time previous to your birth; but that my father was the unhappy source of such a train of calamities, oh! who could have conceived possible!—that astonishing fact never, never could you have divined.

I consider this confidence, therefore, as a justification of his memory; and though the sad relation itself is a sacred trust to be reposed only in the faithful bosom

bosom of friendship, would to heaven all the world were as well acquainted with his remorse as with his faults; and that the knowledge of his sufferings could wholly obliterate the recollection of his errors. Adieu, my dearest friend.

Yours affectionately,

H. SEYMOUR.

TO MY DAUGHTERS.

WHEN this packet is delivered to my dear girls, I shall not have to blush for its contents: I shall be then no more: and as it is essentially requisite that they should one day be made acquainted with their real situation in life, I have for two reasons preferred that awful period for this painful communication: in the first place, the information I am about to disclose, is attended with circumstances of a nature

nature so mortifying, humiliating, and severe, that at that solemn period only can I support the idea of presenting myself to the astonished view of my children, in a light so different from that in which they have ever been accustomed to regard me; and secondly, when their soft and affectionate hearts are subdued by affliction at their recent loss, only can I flatter myself they will look with candour and indulgence on errors—nay crimes—of which, till that instant, they had believed me incapable.

Be not overwhelmed with horror, my beloved children, on perusing these words:—words, of an import so dreadful, and which you never could have conceived connected with your father's name. Heaven has, I trust, accepted the tribute of sufferings, which heaven alone could have enabled me to endure; and ere these lines are submitted to your knowledge, as all my sorrows will be laid at rest, let the
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the consideration of that felicity which I humbly hope will be then my portion, console and sustain you under the shock your sensibility must receive from the tale of woe I am about to unfold. You must often have regretted, I am convinced, the solitude in which I have obliged you to live; and I make no doubt, in secret condemned that averseness to all social intercourse, which I have uniformly testified as long as your remembrance can trace back. This, and many other particulars, which perhaps may have at times proved matter both of surprize and concern, I mean here fully to explain; and in particular that question will at length receive a satisfactory reply, which has been hitherto productive only of vague, evasive, and embarrassed answers, viz.—how I, an Englishman, apparently attached to my own nation, and partial to its customs, should have voluntarily exiled myself from my country, and secluding
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ing myself from my family, my friends, and the world, formed the singular resolution of terminating my days in a retired spot in the South of France.

I hasten therefore to inform you, that even your name has hitherto been a secret to you.

My father, though my misconduct has cast a cloud over his days, I hope, and believe, is still alive;—at least, I had intelligence of his being in good health, within a few days from this date. He is Earl of Belmont, a nobleman of extensive interest in his own country; and I am the eldest of two sons, which, with one daughter, whose birth occasioned the death of her mother, is all the family he ever possessed.

I pass over the early part of my life, which I spent at home, and generally in the country under the direction of a very worthy man, who presided as tutor over my brother and myself. My father,
who

who was violent in prejudice and rigid in principle, allowed us few indulgencies; and had made choice of our preceptor rather for the integrity of his heart, than on account of the superior abilities of his mind, which had been narrowed by the retirement of life, and total ignorance of the world: but my Lord, whose knowledge of men and manners had not rendered *his* notions less contracted, imagined we could nowhere so effectually imbibe the first sentiments of virtue, as under the tuition of a man, whose purity was such, that he seemed to know little difference between an error and a crime. The system by which we were educated, was of course strict in the extreme; but the austere principles that had been early implanted in our minds, our companions at College found it no difficult matter to extirpate; and a slight acquaintance with society, soon convinced us, that
we

we were incapable of adhering to habits, absurd in themselves, and of no assistance either to religion or morality. Having once deviated from prejudices, however weak, which the mind has been accustomed to regard as sacred, to stop exactly at the proper limits of rectitude requires a portion of steady fortitude even superior to that which preserves us firm in our first impressions; the reformation is indeed but too often followed by a total revolution of principle, and even virtue herself is not unfrequently overturned under the appellation of *confined ideas*.— Such, at least, was in part the change my mind underwent after having resided some time at the university.

When the part of my education to be there attained was completed, I set out on my travels; and immediately after my return from the Continent, that busy period of my life commenced, the bitter recollection of which almost incapacitates

incapacitates me from relating the many painful occurrences it produced.

My brother had chosen a military life, and we had not met during three years which I spent abroad. We kept up a constant correspondence however; and he was with his regiment in Ireland at the time of my arrival in England. I received a letter from him soon after, intimating his having lately married a young lady, of whom he seemed passionately enamoured, but who did not possess any of those advantages, either of family or fortune, likely to reconcile my father to a step in which he had not been consulted. Conscious how tenacious my Lord ever had been of his authority, added to an invincible prepossession, which he had long entertained against the Irish nation, my brother, in the height of his nuptial felicity, could not avoid suffering the severest apprehensions for the consequences of his

his imprudence; and besought me to exert all my influence with my father, to soften his wrath at this unexpected intelligence.

My endeavours, however, were on this head ineffectual; my Lord was overwhelmed with a rage that did not evaporate with its violence, but subsided into a determined, inflexible resentment; by which he allowed himself to be so completely governed, that he resolved never more to behold his disobedient son; who must have found himself extremely embarrassed in his finances, had not my purse supplied his necessities to the utmost extent of my ability. In vain I represented to my father that the alliance, though neither splendid nor desirable, was equally removed from what could be deemed disgraceful: he silenced me with vehemence; and solemnly declared, that never more should my brother receive the shadow of his countenance.

countenance.—A resolution, alas! which my superior misconduct alone, persuaded him to relinquish.

I passed the summer after my return at my father's country seat; and spent great part of my time in hunting—my favourite amusement. Returning one day from the chase, the weather being extremely sultry, my fatigue occasioned an extreme thirst, which induced me to dismount at the door of a farm-house possessed by one of my father's tenants, not many miles from the castle.

As I knocked, the farmer himself appeared; and upon mentioning my name, and requesting a draught of something to refresh me, he conducted me with the utmost hurry of civility into a small rustic parlour, where were sitting his wife and daughter. The latter astonished me with her uncommon beauty; which was rendered still more interesting from having surprized her in
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tears: she allowed me no time however to contemplate her charms, for ashamed of being caught by a stranger in that situation, she made no return to my salutation, but ran hastily out of the room.

I made a thousand apologies to the farmer's wife for my intrusion; and so greatly was I struck with the daughter's appearance, that I could not help expressing my regret at beholding her in such affliction; which I intended as the least inquisitive method I could devise of enquiring the cause.

Oh, nothing in the world, my Lord, said the farmer, your Lordship does her too much honour in observing her. It would be very far either from her mother's wish or mine to vex her, if she would be persuaded to listen to her own interest; but girls are so wilful——

From this I conjectured what I afterwards learnt was the case—that the old people

people were teasing their daughter to dispose of her hand contrary to her inclination. But though I felt myself unaccountably interested in what I had seen, it was necessary that my enquiries should immediately end, as the good woman came at that instant to supply me with what I had asked for, and I was constrained unwillingly to depart.

This beautiful girl ran in my head the whole day: though I make no doubt but I should have forgotten that she existed in a week, had not my infant passion been nourished by several circumstances which afterwards occurred.

When I returned to dinner, I found a large party of neighbours who were paying visits of congratulation at the Castle on account of my sister Lady Ann's marriage with Mr. Vere, an event that had taken place a few weeks before. In the course of conversation at table, I mentioned my little adventure,

particularly dwelling on the extreme beauty and distress of the tenant's daughter.—Yes, cried the curate, who happened to be present, Fanny is the prettiest girl in the parish, and one of the best; but her parents have carried matters much too far, and have rendered her quite miserable, by insisting on the poor young woman's disposing of herself to fat Robin, your Lordship's gamekeeper. They have teased and tormented her till they had almost driven her to venture on a very alarming step, to get rid of their importunities; she had privately determined to leave home, and take her chance of finding a service in town; but my wife suspecting her intention, deterred her from a scheme so fraught with danger, by representing the hazards attending such an exploit.

The conversation shifted to other topics; but Fanny and her distress frequently occurred to my mind. I wished
much

much to deliver her from it; but I distrusted myself so little, as never once to suspect I was actuated in my wishes to relieve her by any other motive than that interest which youth and beauty, even without having produced any particular predilection, seldom fail to excite in hearts of common sensibility. She appeared so amiable and so innocent, that, free as were my notions on certain subjects, the idea of deriving any sinister advantage to myself by releasing her from her present persecutions, never entered my imagination.

I contrived, as the best method of succeeding I could devise, to interest Lady Ann in the affair; who during her walks called at the farmer's, and represented so strongly to his wife, who had been an old servant in the family, the cruelty and injustice of forcing her daughter into the arms of a man she detested, that the old woman was prevailed on to give up the point

herself, and faithfully promised to use all her influence with her husband to persuade him to relinquish the plan likewise. In this visit my sister was so much pleased with the bewitching simplicity of Fanny's manners and appearance, and the unbounded gratitude she expressed for this obligation, that she made her an offer of supplying the place of her maid, who was just leaving her. Fanny thankfully accepted the proposal; and the old people, happy in thinking their daughter settled under the protection of Lady Ann, consented with eagerness to the measure; so that on my return from a short excursion I had made about that time, I found Fanny actually residing in the castle.

The frequent opportunities I now enjoyed of seeing her, in a short time convinced me I was not proof against her charms. Far, however, from stifling this flame in its progress, I allowed it
every

every encouragement and indulgence. Some similar amours abroad, into which bad company and ungoverned passions led me, had already blunted, though not eradicated, my first feelings of repugnance at the idea of seduction; and I retained merely virtue sufficient to undergo that penance, which conscience, except where the heart is hardened in iniquity, never fails to exact from vice upon every new violation of her laws. But these transient scruples were not sufficiently powerful to enable me to listen to dictates so austere; I had little fear of being unsuccessful with a young country girl who had not as yet, I imagined, formed any attachment, and whose heart, I concluded, would easily yield to the vanity of having engaged mine. I therefore assailed this amiable and unfortunate girl, with all the warmth and force of the most persuasive passion; but I soon found that an innate love of

virtue, and sentiments of pride superior to her condition, induced her to reject my offers and advances with horror and disdain. I was not, however, repulsed: the success attending former pursuits made me still confident of prevailing in the end; but the resistance I met with so inflamed and augmented my affection, that from an insinuating inclination, which might have been in its infancy easily subdued, I found this attachment was become a violent and unmanageable passion, that, in its consequences, involved both its innocent object and myself in misery and ruin.

I became at last alarmed on perceiving how essential this affair was grown to my repose; that Fanny was every hour gaining ground in my heart and rising in my estimation, while I seemed as far as ever from making any progress in hers; and I began to think her worthy of a more honourable flame, and to
compassionate

compassionate the uneasiness into which my solicitations had thrown her.

I soon perceived that for my own happiness as well as hers, my importunities had been carried greatly too far, and I determined to make one great effort to restore my own tranquillity and her peace; but I did not consider how difficult the task would prove; unused to constraint, accustomed to give inclination full swing, to conquer at once a predilection so formidable, was an undertaking much too violent with which to begin my first essay of self-denial. I resolved, however, to try the effects of absence, a medicine of wonderful efficacy in diseases of the heart; and accordingly proposed to make an excursion of a few weeks, accompanied by some friends who were at that time my father's guests.

On the evening previous to our departure, fatigued with the exertions which the attentions due to a large com-

pany of ladies exacted, exhausted by overacted endeavours to appear in spirits, and sick of a frivolous conversation, which amused minds at ease within themselves, and who willingly laid hold for entertainment on every little trifle that occurred, I contrived to slip away in the height of their mirth, intending to stroll out towards the wood, to soothe my uneasiness by giving way to reflexions which oppressed and overpowered me.

The night was uncommonly delightful, and the full moon shone with a clearness which reflected a pleasing serenity on every object around. I gave way to a train of ideas, that filled me not only with anguish but alarm; I found that my passion for a girl so every way beneath me possessed not only the power of destroying my peace, but even in some measure had weakened my reason: for so entirely had my heart surrendered to its influence, that the
thoughts

thoughts of relinquishing every prospect of preferment and dignity in my future establishment, and the certainty of ruining myself with my father, were less dreadful to my apprehension than the resolution of thwarting an attachment, to which seemed annexed every hope of happiness and enjoyment: in a word—that the possession of Fanny in a legal manner was more than a recompence for the many evils which I knew must follow such a step.

I started from my reverie, when I found how unjustifiably far my imagination had carried me; and endeavoured to represent to myself the weakness and folly, as well as the danger, attending the indulgence of such reflections. Perceiving how fatally solitude and musing enfeeble fortitude and nourish the foibles of the heart, I was about to return back to the house, when a voice which I heard at some distance, induced me to stop for
a moment;

a moment; and instantly recollecting it to be my dear Fanny's, my intention of returning was immediately converted into a resolution of approaching as softly as possible to the place where she sat, in order to overhear her conversation. This I effected with great caution; and found she was enjoying the cool of the evening in company with one of her companions, and that not fearing interruption from any of the family at that hour, they had ventured to seat themselves at the side of some bushes in the shrubbery.

I heard the friend, in a voice of compassion, endeavouring to soothe Fanny in consequence of some complaint which I concluded she had been confiding to her, and to which the most mournful sighs were on her part the only replies. Her arguments of comfort were not indeed the best calculated for consolation, but

but they were designed for sympathy, and expressed with much simplicity.

Indeed my dear Fanny, said she, could you have been persuaded to have accepted of my cousin, you would have escaped all this trouble and vexation. Time goes a great way in conquering people's dislikes. What one likes at one time one can't abide at another; and the contrary is just as common. When once Mr. Robert was your husband, you would have been obliged to have loved him; and he loves you so well, you know, that it must have come of course. If all this had happened now, and I'm sure I always told you that you never would do so well elsewhere, there would have been no word of his young Lordship, and your heart would have been as light as mine is at this instant.

Talk not to me of your cousin, cried Fanny in a tone of impatience mixed with despondency—I hate and detest him.

What

What have I not suffered, added she, melting into tears after a short pause, within these last six sad months: tormented by that hateful man, teized by my mother, terrified by my father; no sooner had I got rid of that persecution, than I came hither to endure another a thousand times more insupportable; and what course can I possibly now pursue, which is not loaded with difficulties and attended on all sides with danger. If I return home, I dread reviving the old story; if I remain here, then certain misery awaits me; and oh! at times, my dear Jenny, at times I am almost terrified for myself; for though from my heart I abhor my Lord's insulting offers and proposals, yet alas! my heart is weak, and I find it is impossible to abhor *him*.

I often wish, continued she, in the same mournful accents, that I had either died last year, when I was so ill and all
my

my friends were weeping round me—
ah! what anguish had I been spared!—
or that it had pleased God to have placed
me in a situation less beneath the only
man who ever made the slightest im-
pression on my heart. But this is a wish
which carries me so far, and softens me
so sadly, that I dare not allow myself to
dwell upon it. Yet, Jenny, I cannot re-
sist some times indulging the idea of what
unspeakable happiness must have been
my lot, had the Almighty lessened the
immense distance between us, and I had
still possessed the blessing of being agree-
able to him. Had it so happened; had
I been placed in his station, and he been
in mine, I'm certain I should have joy-
fully overlooked every objection to have
made *him* happy: and I often think, if
his Lordship professes to love me so well
now, when I use my utmost endeavours
to conceal my fatal partiality, surely he
would not have loved me less, when all
my

my happiness centered in the wish of being agreeable in his eyes: yet as matters go with great people, *he* will probably marry some rich lady, continued she, her tears flowing abundantly, who may regard nothing but his fine estate and splendid titles, and one besides whom he may not even himself love; for great people do not marry as we do.

What a sad thing it is, that all great gentlemen are such rakes, cried the friend. But could you not contrive to give your lady warning. I'll warrant a few weeks absence will put all to rights.

That is what I have often thought of, cried the other, and what I am afraid I shall be constrained to do at last; but oh! my dear Jenny! what will not such a step cost me? shall I be able to live, after I quit the castle? But to be sure quit it I must, and the sooner I die the better.

Nay, for my part, I know nothing half so frightful as dying, I promise you,
cried

cried the friend. How can you talk so wildly? But you'll think better of that, I trust, before long: you are not the first, God knows, that has been crossed in love, and people don't always die for all that.

Melted beyond expression by what I overheard, I scarce breathed, from the fear of losing one word of this artless, interesting conversation. When the friend arose, and proposed returning home, I heard Fanny offer to accompany her part of the way to the village, saying she was not afraid, though alone and so late, as the moon shone bright, and she would return by a private gate which led from the park into the fields, and was a near cut. They immediately walked away, and I remained in a state of mind not to be conceived but in similar circumstances.

The discovery I had made of my gentle Fanny's amiable partiality, in the very moment that I was exhausting every
source

source of fortitude to enable me to renounce her, threw me into a state little short of distraction; and determined me at once to overleap all the bars that lay in the way, and to offer her my hand and heart in a legal manner. This resolution, the offspring of an overheated imagination, and of that impetuosity of temper which in a thousand instances I have had such cause to deplore, I resolved instantly to make known to her, and to wait her return at the little gate, in order to communicate it. During this interval, instead of recalling my reason to my aid, and maturely weighing the consequences of so imprudent a determination, I gave way to the delirium, and indulged in a train of the most pleasing and flattering illusions: I imagined I was beginning to enjoy a foretaste of that happiness from which an absurd prejudice had too long precluded me; and I carefully checked every

every rising objection to a measure which already diffused such infinite satisfaction over my mind.

I walked backwards and forwards, anticipating that delight in the possession of the dear object of my affections, which with such amiable simplicity she herself had described but the moment before, and dwelt with particular pleasure on the soothing idea of the height to which gratitude must raise her attachment when she came to know what proofs I meant to give her of mine.

At last Fanny appeared in sight, and I flew towards her. I acknowledged the enchanting discovery I had made, and the effect *that* discovery had produced upon my heart, till wholly overpowered with my vows and protestations, she wept in my arms, and confessed that she loved me above all men. We were in this situation, when the supper bell obliged us to separate. Fanny, agitated
and

and bewildered by this unexpected event, and apprehensive of detection, at length prevailed with me, though not without difficulty, to leave her, having promised to meet me in the wood early next morning.

On my return to the company, I found my brother in law had received letters from town which required his immediate attendance there. As my sister of course accompanied him, I knew Fanny must be of the party; and to leave her now, was as far distant from my thoughts as it had been fixed in my determination three hours before. I therefore pretended to have had dispatches by the same post, which obliged me to visit London likewise; and without much difficulty got myself excused from the excursion which had originally been planned by myself.

When I retired to rest, I had leisure to reflect on the events of the day. My
mind

mind having time to cool, I began clearly to see that I was standing on the threshold of danger. Fanny's image however, which perpetually presented itself to my view, and the recollection of the scene which so lately had passed between us, the vows that had proceeded from my lips, warm from my heart, and the soft gratitude she had expressed in terms so endearing, all fixed me immovably in my determination; though I perceived through the cloud which passion threw over my reason, a source of innumerable troubles and objections; but these gloomy suggestions a lively imagination and sanguine hopes, enabled me quickly to chase from my thoughts.

I began at last to form a scheme to which I hoped my dear Fanny would easily be induced to consent: this was, to be united to her privately, and carefully to conceal the connection till my father's death should leave me at liberty
to

to avow my choice ; and this, with extreme caution, I concluded might be effected.

On meeting next morning, I communicated my plan, which met with my dear girl's approbation : one circumstance alone gave her uneasiness and held her determination for some time suspended ; this was, how she should conduct herself with regard to her parents, to whom she was tenderly attached, and who, she said, she well knew must receive a mortal wound were they to imagine her capable of consenting to any step prejudicial to her reputation. It was impossible for me to agree to their being informed of our private marriage, as so many reasons required it to be kept an inviolable secret ; and there was so little probability that two old people of their condition would preserve concealed, what a due regard to the honour of their only child must prompt them to divulge, when her elopement and concealment should call
her

her fame in question. This was so apparent, that Fanny was easily convinced of the necessity, however disagreeable, of leaving them in ignorance. The idea however of embittering their days with the belief of her seduction drove her almost to despair: yet it is not surprizing that my arguments and endearments, my promises and professions, should have gradually reconciled her to inflicting this blow; as I did not fail to suggest the triumph they would one day experience in the discovery of her exaltation and innocence; besides that I proposed to soften their anxiety by dictating a letter, which Fanny actually wrote to her mother, acquainting her that for reasons she was not at liberty to reveal, she was forced to conceal herself for a season from them and the world, but that a period would certainly arrive when she should again embrace them; adding many assurances that when she should have that happiness, it

it would be without a blush for her past conduct, which ever had been, and ever should continue to be, conformable to the principles and instructions she had early imbibed from them. Fanny likewise promised to give them intelligence of her welfare from time to time, if they would have the goodness still to interest themselves in their child's happiness, while appearances were so unfavourable to her. This method, together with an annual sum, which I promised to remit to them without a possibility of their tracing from whence it came, made my Fanny tolerably easy; or rather the softness of her nature conspiring with her tenderness, overcame her scruples, and she listened to a plan she knew not how to improve.

Business at this time called my brother and sister to visit an estate lately left him in Scotland by a distant relation. I immediately proposed being of the party, pretending

pretending an inclination to visit that part of the island, conscious that I could there compleat my scheme with the most security from suspicion.

We accordingly set off; and on our arrival at Edinburgh, Fanny, who was innocence herself, allowed me to conduct her to a private part of the town, where a clergyman, whom I had engaged to secrecy both by bribes and the most solemn oaths, performed the ceremony which united her to me by laws both human and divine.

I will confess to you, my children, humiliating as is the avowal, that the confidence placed in me more than once tempted me to betray it; and that the facility with which it was in my power to have deluded my artless bride with a false marriage, held the execution of my project for some time suspended: but though the whole transaction confessed

an unpardonable weakness, in this instance it was unstained with guilt.

Our journey down gave me opportunities of meeting with Fanny, and conversing with her more unsuspectedly than I could otherwise have hoped for; yet I could perceive that my sister was not without her suspicions of my partiality for her maid, and very often rallied me on it, though she could not possibly have conceived the slightest idea of the imprudence into which my fatal weakness had involved me.

That my wife should continue a moment in her present humble situation about my sister, was what I could by no means brook. Two days therefore after our union, which had taken place on the day of our arrival, by my contrivance she pretended to have received accounts of her mother's being dangerously ill, and requested leave to return home with all expedition, in order to give her the
necessary

necessary attendance. It was not without infinite reluctance that the dear girl was prevailed on to adopt this little artifice; and the tears she shed at parting from Lady Ann, to whom she was tenderly attached, must inevitably have excited some suspicion that she meant to return to her no more, had not the occasion of her departure furnished an apparent excuse for them.

As I had time to digest my scheme before it was put into execution, I had provided a small house in a private street in London for the residence of my wife, under the name of Mrs. Smith. There I hoped to visit her frequently, unsuspected by the world, and thither I was eager to follow her. Prudence however required that I should remain behind with my sister and her husband; but as they continued only a few weeks at their new estate, my impatience was soon gratified by our return to London, where I

met my lovely bride with all the ardour and impatience natural to my disposition.

For some months my passion, far from suffering any abatement, rather seemed to encrease. At this time my father came up to town; and as I lodged with him, I was constrained to visit less often in the city, and with redoubled caution; but the difficulties which retarded our meetings, and their consequent infrequency, gave them an unspeakable charm—a charm, alas! the warmth of which a short time diminished!

The entire solitude in which my wife lived (for I was her only visitor) made my society and conversation her only happiness and amusement. Her education had totally unfitted her for mental entertainments; nor had she been taught those accomplishments which fill up agreeably the leisure hours of a woman of fashion, and from the unavoidable retirement in which she lived, little variety
of

of conversation was possible : when therefore the mist of passion began to dissipate, I found her still lovely, amiable, and innocent; but unfortunately perceived that these alluring qualities were not in themselves sufficient to retain my wandering affections. Her conversation soon became insipid to me; and the desire of embellishing her mind by directing her studies (at first my most pleasing amusement) now ceased to interest me. The tenderness of her affection long prevented her from expressing even a murmur at my too apparent neglect; although I could not but perceive that her spirits were visibly affected by it: and she always received me, after a fortnight's solitary absence, with the most lively expressions of joy.

It was not immediately however that this unhappy change took place: and your birth, my Hermione, which happened not till three years after our mar-

riage, supplied your mother with a pleasing source of amusement, sufficiently interesting I hope to prevent her thoughts from brooding over the mortifying and painful alteration in my behaviour.

At this period I became acquainted with a set of companions of the most dissipated character. My particular friends were two young men of agreeable and insinuating, but of profligate manners. In their company I led the most irregular life: and soon began to consider the hours I spent occasionally with my wife as a point of duty rather than of inclination, and with regard to the discharge of duties which interfered with my pleasures, I grew every day less solicitous: this therefore, among the rest, became extremely neglected; and I heartily regretted the indissoluble knot which had placed your mother in a situation that rendered my attentions absolutely necessary to her happiness: the seclusion of her life affected, but it
also

also chagrined me; and her dependance, once so pleasing, seemed now a burthen that I endeavoured to shake off, flattering myself that her child would amply compensate for the loss of my society.

Twelve or fourteen months passed on in this manner; till my wife, at length wounded to the soul, began to adopt the worst of all methods for recovering a lost attachment, by complaining of my coldness. This she did with her accustomed softness, and by tears rather than reproaches; but it was a subject which embittered so extremely the short intervals I spent with her, that they grew less frequent than ever, although the birth of her second child (you, my dear Fanny) ought to have proved an additional tie towards cementing my affection.

My father, who regarded himself as exceedingly unfortunate in my brother's marriage, often proposed to me to marry, and had at different periods pointed out

several advantageous connexions, among whom he wished me to choose; but as my heart was not interested, though the subject embarrassed, it did not wound me, and I evaded it with little difficulty.

My sister, one evening at her house, introduced to me a young lady with whom she had been on a footing of the strictest intimacy whilst I was on my travels, but whom, till now, I had never seen, owing to her having accompanied her father to the Court of Turin, where he resided in a public character, and from which place she was but just returned.

Miss Marsdon was uncommonly beautiful; and her manners and address, though highly cultivated, preserved an interesting simplicity which rendered her perfectly irresistible: her conversation, refined by an admirable understanding, embellished by education, and polished by an early introduction into the most
polite

polite company abroad, possessed an ease and delicacy of good breeding almost as striking, at first sight, as the charms of her figure.—I felt the full force of both, and was conquered at once. With the blind impetuosity which marked my character, instead of exerting my utmost efforts to resist and avoid a temptation I found too insinuating, I gave way to this seducing passion, and shut my eyes on its unhappy consequences, so fraught with misery, remorse, and guilt. It was then that I cursed my folly, and that infatuation which had before guided me. Ever violent and untractable, I was almost driven to despair at the recollection of the weakness which had placed a bar so insuperable between me and my wishes. But there soon arose in my breast a ray of hope; the production of ungoverned passions, selfishness and treachery, which first suggested an action that has thrown the gloom of the

bitterest self-reproach on all the succeeding years of my life.

The lovely Miss Marsdon, an only child, and heiress to an immense fortune, possessed a considerable estate which she had inherited from her mother, and which lay contiguous to Belmont Castle. This circumstance, though trivial in itself, had induced my father often to express his wishes that a marriage between the young lady and myself might take place. Her absence had hitherto entirely frustrated this plan, and given birth to other schemes; but her unexpected return at this juncture made him directly renew the old topic of matrimony, to which, hitherto, I had never been prevailed on to listen. Far from being averse to this match, he said he saw with pleasure it was an union into which I would enter with avidity; and that as the young lady herself seemed, if he might judge from appearances, to receive my attentions

tions with all the modest approbation I could wish, he thought the next step was to apply to his old friend Lord Embdon for his sanction and consent.

The mention of such a transaction made my blood run cold, and I received it with an embarrassment which not only astonished but extremely displeased my father; though, at the very moment that I half declined what my heart panted to obtain, I was revolving in my mind the means of bringing such a scheme to bear. The success hitherto attending my attempt of concealment, encouraged me, and I began to flatter myself that my engagements with your mother might remain an eternal secret to the world, which would leave me at liberty to form what new ones I pleased with the amiable object of my present affections; this, I imagined, might for many years remain unknown to my real wife, who saw only her own servants,

none

none of whom had been informed of my name, and who, being perfectly unacquainted even with the meaning of the word politics, had ever declared that newspapers were the dullest of all reading; and I knew she received none of the daily prints into her family. All these circumstances induced me to hope that she might long continue in ignorance; and that when the fatal intelligence, that I had connected myself with another, should at length reach her ears, and she knew my heart was totally alienated from her, I believed, or rather I forced myself to believe, that the gentleness of her nature would never allow her to plunge me at once into infamy and contempt by detection, but that she might without difficulty be persuaded, as the calamity was without remedy, to rest satisfied in obscurity, with conscious innocence and affluence, all that had hitherto been her solitary portion. This
certainly

certainly was a design which a thousand unforeseen accidents might disclose to the world, and, at best, extremely improbable to effect; but I was willingly blind to the future, and solicitous only for the gratification of the present moment. I considered also, that should your mother's just resentment prompt her to divulge the truth, the measures I had taken, though not with that intention at the time, had all conspired to prevent any credit from being given to her assertions: the ceremony had been performed in Scotland; the clergyman's abode she knew not, nor was she acquainted with his name but from the certificate of our marriage, which indeed still remained in her hands, and which I regarded as the only bar. I often therefore revolved on the means of getting it into my possession; and most undoubtedly should one day or other have effected it, but conscious guilt prevented me

me at the time from venturing on any steps towards this end, terrified to awaken suspicion while my plot was but in agitation.

It was not without extreme anguish that I considered the felicity I was purchasing for myself must be at the expence of an amiable young creature's happiness, who had once been the object of my warmest affections, and who still loved me passionately; who regarded me as her guardian and protector, who lived in a manner on my smiles, whose countenance ever betrayed dejection on the slightest appearance in mine either of indifference or ill humour, and who had brought me two lovely infants, pledges of her tenderness and of my treachery. But I quickly chased away those painful suggestions of conscience; drowned them in wine, or forgot them entirely at the first glance of my beloved Julia.

In

In a word, I made my addresses to Miss Marsden, and was accepted. My Lord, overjoyed at finding me willing at last to close with his wishes, hastened the preliminaries; and Lord Embdon, happy in settling his daughter to his satisfaction, (as there had ever subsisted the strictest friendship between him and my father) insisted on celebrating our marriage at his country seat in the most sumptuous manner, where a number of relations on both sides were to be present.

During the preparations, my heart, though so near enjoying its utmost wish, was weighed down with a burthen of guilt, the sensation of which let none call themselves miserable till they have endured; for perfect misery cannot subsist without the feelings of remorse. As the time approached, my agitation became more violent; in the presence of
my

my lovely Julia they were annihilated; but alone they were insupportable.

Miss Marsdon and her friends had already left town, and I was to follow the next day, and the ensuing one was to determine my fate. On the evening previous to my departure, being uneasy in my mind, I resolved to pay your mother a visit, while I had not as yet actually injured her: you will imagine this a strange step in such circumstances, when on the eve of inflicting a wound which must for ever destroy her tranquillity; but in fact I was so oppressed with a load of secret sufferings, that it fell to me like the discharge of a duty to which was attached some degree of merit from the pain it occasioned me. I found her low spirited and indisposed; shall I add another circumstance calculated to have awakened every sentiment of tenderness and compassion, had not my heart been hardened and every feeling warped in selfishness

selfishness—she was with child, and had suffered much from the attendant circumstances of her situation: this, together with the air of *sombre* seclusion which every thing wore, and which had never before struck me so forcibly, softened and affected me. Your mother was ill and alone; no parents to soothe, no friends to attend her; all was gloomy and dejected around her; it was I that was the occasion of what she now felt, and what she had further to endure; yet—yet—I was villain enough to persist in my intention to destroy her! not but that a violent though transient remorse made me hesitate for a moment; but I presently laboured to satisfy my conscience with this sophistry, that I had gone too far now to retract, and that as I had probably engaged the affections both of my wife and of my mistress, and rendered their felicity dependant on mine, since one must suffer, it was at least allowable

lowable that I should spare regret and disappointment from being the portion of her who had it in her power to confer unspeakable happiness on me.

As to your mother, the joy of seeing me, and the unusual tenderness with which her situation inspired me, made her dissolve into tears that silently reproached my perfidy. I pleaded an excursion from town in excuse for my long absence, and informed her of an unavoidable journey I was on the eve of taking which must deprive me of the pleasure of seeing her for a still longer time. She did not utter a complaint; but drying up her tears, you have deprived yourself of much pleasure, my dear Lord, said she; and instantly ordering the maid to bring the children to me began, with all the tenderness of a mother, to repeat the improvements you had both made since my last visit, which was about three months before, with many innocent expressions

pressions of anxiety to see me, and wonder at my absence, that had fallen from the infant lips of you, my dear Hermione, then scarce three years old.

My children are my only consolation in your absence, my Lord, said your mother, tenderly pressing my hand; but I thank heaven I have *them*. To be sure I cannot expect, in our present situation, to enjoy much of your company; but I live in the hope that the day will arrive—

The entrance of the maid, with Fanny in her arms and leading in Hermione, left the sentence unfinished which was a dagger to my heart. I think I was hardly ever more affected than when you, my Hermione, rejected my caresses, and seeing your mother's eyes red with weeping, asked me, with a resentment which was immediately after followed by tears, why I made mama cry? This innocent reproach, under which lurked a meaning conscious only to myself, made me heap expressions

expressions of tenderness on both the mother and child, while I was preparing a blow for the former that laid her in the dust.

I left the house in a state of mind not to be expressed. I spent the first part of the night in misery: but the idea of what next morning was to bestow, removed the image of your mother in tears, and presented to me that of a lovely and beloved bride ready to give herself to my wishes.

I accordingly set out next day with a large suite of friends, was married immediately on my arrival at the Hall, and had all my conscientious scruples soon drowned in an intoxication of happiness.

After spending some weeks in great gaiety, I carried my amiable bride to my father's country seat, to which place we were accompanied by most of the party; and here we continued the same round of amusements for a fortnight longer. My
soul

soul however was soon to awaken from this dream of joy, and to receive the due reward of its crime in the shame and remorse which succeeded.

The company had just returned one evening from an agreeable excursion on the water, and the ladies being in high spirits, had insisted on fiddles being sent for, so that a kind of ball was going forward on the lawn before the house, the weather being uncommonly delightful, when my servant, calling me aside, delivered into my hands a letter, the superscription of which made me tremble. I hastened instantly to my own apartment; where, securing myself from interruption, I found it, as I suspected, from your mother, and the contents as follows :

TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD LINROSE.

If your heart ever felt for one instant
the affection you have a thousand times
sworn

sworn to me, if during the whole course of your life it has once been awakened by compassion, think what she who writes to you feels at this moment; think, that to the ruin of that fame which you have clouded with seeming guilt, and to the total alienation of that affection which has cost me so dear, is superadded the insupportable misery of knowing you to be treacherous and inhuman. Ah! my Lord! if your bosom still retains one vulnerable spot, where pity is not debarred an entrance, come to me instantly. The Almighty has lent a gracious ear to my petitions, and shortly shall you be relieved from the infamy of your present state. My fatigues and agitations have accelerated my pangs; I am even already ill; deny me not therefore this last sad dying request, and deny not yourself the satisfaction of receiving my forgiveness; a circumstance to which you will one day most assuredly attach
some

some degree of importance. Think of me as the mother of your children: come at least and contemplate your own work, and behold me, in this dismal cottage, expire in giving birth to an infant whose premature existence must throw an eternal stain upon its father's name.

I will not pretend to describe my agonies on perusing this pathetic letter, every word of which gave me a mortal wound. All the terrors of my perfidy (till that instant too fatally lulled by opposite passions) at once assailed me. The misery in which my crimes had involved *her* who had once been the object of my tenderest affections, the despair into which I was about to plunge *her* who at present engrossed them with so much fervour, the grief and astonishment of my family, my treachery exposed, my character blasted for ever, altogether excited such
sentiments

sentiments of horror as overpowered my senses, and almost bereaved me of reason.

Having fortunately secured myself from interruption, I had a little time, after the first shock was over, to consider what steps I ought to pursue in a moment so replete with alarm. In the present exigency no time was to be lost. I therefore determined to write a short billet in answer by the return of your mother's messenger. It was not an easy task: to offer any thing like an apology, especially on paper, was impossible; to work on the softness of her nature was all my trust, and the only circumstance on which I could build the slightest foundation for hope. I made no attempt therefore towards vindicating myself; but reserving that till I should see her, I only intimated in a few lines the anguish her note had given me, confessed appearances were against me, but faithfully promised to pay her a visit next morning, at which
time

time I should exert my utmost endeavours to satisfy and relieve her; concluding with the most earnest prayers and entreaties that she would preserve as a profound secret, her name, her abode, and her connexion with me, which I added would plunge us both into immediate ruin and destruction, were they to reach my father's knowledge.

I then enquired, though not without much perturbation, for the person who had brought the letter, and was told that a country girl had given it into the hands of the housekeeper early that morning, but the party in which I had been engaged had prevented my receiving it till the evening, and the girl had left no message to what place an answer might be sent.

I was grieved to the soul at this information; for as it was impossible for me, without exciting surprise and perhaps suspicion, to quit the house at so

late an hour, I was constrained to leave your unfortunate mother in the dismal suspense of fruitless expectation.

My answer indeed, had she received it, was little calculated to have afforded her consolation; and my visit could only have confirmed her despair. I caught eagerly however at a faint ray of hope, which I cherished even against reason and conviction, to prevent me from absolute frenzy, and I could not help resting with some slight degree of comfort on the mildness of this letter, though written in the heat of a resentment so justly excited. Her gentle bosom thought not of revenge: on the contrary, her visit to see me seemed prompted by the desire of according me forgiveness.

But before I proceed in the recital of my own sufferings, and the horrid scene that awaited me on the dreadful day that succeeded to this miserable evening, let me previously inform you, with as much
composure

composure as I can assume, of the hopeless fate of your innocent, your injured mother, whose calamities I shall ever, with the bitterest remorse, to my latest moment deplore; and the relation of which recalls feelings so acute as to tear my bosom while I transmit them to paper.

In what manner she became acquainted with the circumstance of my marriage, I have never been able to discover. The person to whom I owe the following particulars, which, however horrible, I was afterwards anxious to learn, and which, as a just and penitential humiliation, I force myself minutely to relate, had not informed himself in that point; but the fact a thousand ways was ever liable to detection. The instant the report reached your mother's ears, the cold neglect of my past behaviour gave it an apparent credulity that distracted her. Determined to be at once either plunged into

despair by the confirmation of my guilt, or relieved from the agonizing suspicions of her mind, she left London and set off for Netwall, from which place Belmont is but three miles distant.

Afraid to be recognized so near the abode of her youthful and happier days, she borrowed of the woman of the inn a large cloak and hood to disguise her; and terrified to intrust a messenger, ordered a chaise to convey her within half a mile of the castle; where having discharged it, she walked forward with a note in her hand, intimating that she waited for me in the wood, where she entreated me, in the most earnest manner, by all my vows of unabating tenderness and by every motive of humanity and compassion, to meet her immediately.

These few lines she meant herself to deliver to any of the servants she might meet; but what, alas! were her emotions, when on approaching the park gate

gate with timid and hesitating steps, she perceived from behind some bushes, where she hastily concealed herself, a train of carriages, among which she instantly singled me out, seated in my phaeton with a lady whose appearance at the first glance confirmed all her apprehensions.

Some little interruption (for she afterwards related every particular to her mother, who in the bitterness of despair recapitulated them minutely to my informant) obliged me to stop so near, that she observed, or fancied she observed me, address my companion with a look of affection; I even kept her hand for an instant; and my voice, which reached her ears, though imperfectly, seemed softened by tenderness; while that sound, which hitherto had ever conveyed joy and exultation to your mother's bosom, produced now on her heart the effect of a sudden stroke of lightning.

My countenance, however, wore a
E 3 look

look of gaiety which accorded so ill with the consciousness of secret guilt, that the next moment she condemned the injury she imagined her suspicions did me, and even endeavoured to accuse her own hasty jealousy, which had inflicted such misery without any foundation for actual despair. Momentary alas! was this illusion; for as the equipages, attended by several gentlemen on horseback, passed the spot where she had concealed herself, she plainly overheard one of them say to his friend, *how divinely handsome Lady Linrose looks to-day*. Her heart died within her at these words, and she sunk insensible on the ground.

Her senses were quickly restored: but returning recollection brought with it such a weight of anguish and despair, as made her lament the tediousness of death, from whence alone she could now hope for relief to her wretchedness.

She endeavoured however to suggest
a feeble

a feeble hope almost against conviction, to enable her to exist till my return should explain all: for having heard one of the footmen mention that the company would be home to dinner, she concluded we were upon an excursion of pleasure.

Her health having been declining for some months, had much impaired her strength; and it would have been impossible for her to have undergone the fatigues she had that day endured, had not the agitations of her mind supplied a false power of exertion, not unlike the delusive support of a fever, which bestows for a moment an additional but destructive vigour; for she perceived not that she was feeble and exhausted while her spirits and her feelings were all in conflict.

At length she formed a plan to wait my return on the spot where she was, and to seize the opportunity of giving her note to one of my attendants after I

E 4

should

should have passed on, with injunctions to deliver it privately into my own hands. Finding she had probably several hours to wait, she endeavoured to compose her mind: and employed herself in offering up prayers to the Almighty to avert her misfortunes, or to enable her to endure them with humble and becoming submission; and that if it pleased his gracious Providence that she must live and suffer, that her reason might not prove a sacrifice to the agonies she might be doomed to sustain.

Long and tediously the hours rolled on: but at length the carriages came in sight once more, and your unfortunate mother resumed her concealed post. My phæton accidentally stopping to allow a chariot to pass, she heard more distinctly than before the merriment of the whole party, and perceived the criminal author of her miseries with a voice of pleasure pointing out to his beautiful companion
the

the romantic charms of the surrounding prospect. The instant we were gone, she besought one of my servants to take charge of her note: but this the fellow refused, declaring with an oath that his Lordship was not to be troubled with petitions at present.

Wound up almost to a pitch of distraction, she then followed me even to the gate of the castle, her fears, or rather her frenzy, having arisen to a height that gave defiance to her apprehension of being known, though such was her disguise, that it must have concealed her effectually. Unfortunately she again encountered the same inhuman footman, and again entreated him to deliver her letter; but her solicitations only produced some brutal jokes; and she was about to crawl from the door, when the anguish she betrayed induced a maid servant, who accidentally passed at that moment, to enquire into the cause of her

distress; and who, reproving the footman's indelicacy, compassionately undertook to take charge of it. The fellow pulling it from her hand, it was torn in pieces in the girl's struggle to recover it; but delivering the fragments to your mother, she faithfully engaged to present any other she should write. I shall give it, said she, to her Ladyship's maid, who will deliver it into my Lord's own hands. What lady? cried the disconsolate Fanny. Why Lady Linrose to be sure, said the girl; my Lord's new-married lady.

Is then my Lord married? returned she, in feeble accents.

Oh! several weeks ago, answered the other; who from her uneasiness, and the situation in which she beheld her, began to suspect that she was some poor deluded creature;—but his Lordship is very generous; and if he has injured
you,

you, he will make it up beyond your expectation.

Though your mother's apprehensions had before almost amounted to certainty, yet to hear the truth pronounced beyond a flattering possibility of doubt, made her fall senseless into the arms of the humane girl, who instantly called some of the female servants to her assistance; and when your mother opened her eyes, she found herself in the house-keeper's parlour, whither she had been conveyed. On looking round, and perceiving her situation in the very room where every object was as familiar to her as if it had been her own apartment when she resided in the castle, the recollection of what she had suffered since that period wholly overpowered her; and to know herself surrounded by my domestics, and under the same roof with her husband, yet not daring to solicit that support and protection from his care
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and tenderness, to which, particularly in her present situation, she had so just a claim, she found at that instant that shame predominated in her bosom even over despair; and terrified every instant lest accident should present some of her old companions to her view, she thanked her charitable assistants, and made a feeble effort to rise as soon as she had swallowed a few drops that had been given her.

The housekeeper, however, insisted that she should remain till she was somewhat more recovered; and a general sympathy and curiosity having been excited, she was almost stunned with interrogatories: but all she could be prevailed on to acknowledge was, that she brought a bill for Lord Linrose to discharge; and being liable to fits, had been suddenly attacked with one just as she was delivering it to the maid.

Her too apparent distress, her hesitating and embarrassed replies to many distressing

distressing enquiries, and her tears, which now began to yield a mournful relief to agitations her utmost efforts could not conceal, made little credit be given to this assertion; and the circumstances of her situation could not fail to suggest suspicions of a nature the most injurious: yet their compassion left no room for contempt; and the good housekeeper perceiving her scarce able to answer the flow of questions that poured in upon her from every quarter, had the humanity to send away all those whom curiosity had drawn round her, and promised to deliver privately any letter she should confide to her care.

Your unfortunate mother then departed with fatigued steps from the castle, her mind torn by inward struggles and distraction, and her exhausted limbs unable to convey her farther, than to a cottage just without the extremity of the park, whose charitable owner allowed her

her under its roof to court that repose which fled equally from her eye lids and her bosom.

She instantly enquired of the good woman if she knew farmer Williams and his wife, and how they kept on in their old days? To this she was answered, that they were in tolerable health; but that they had received a shock some years before from the misconduct of an only and beloved daughter, which it seemed too probable they never would recover.

My dear Fanny burst into an agony of grief at these words, which instantly infused a suspicion into the country woman that her guest was in fact the deluded daughter of the farmer, whose elopement had occasioned such various reports and conjectures among her relations. The situation in which she beheld her, on the eve of bringing an infant into the world, confirmed this idea; yet

yet though that circumstance was but ill calculated to invalidate the unfavourable rumours circulated at her expence, the too evident distress she endured made her appear so just an object of compassion, that the woman proffered her every assistance in her power: your unfortunate mother however, whose only consolation lay in the free indulgence of sorrow, having asked for pen, ink, and paper, which fortunately were to be had, requested to be left alone; and passed the night in tears, and in writing that melancholy letter, which so pathetically implored my pity instead of breathing the vengeance due to my crimes.

It was yet unfinished; when finding herself taken violently ill, she hastened to conclude it, and enquired for a messenger, to whom she intrusted it under cover to the house-keeper. Though not within some weeks of her expected time, fatigue and agitation soon brought on the

the pangs of child birth; and having only received what assistance the country woman could bestow, she was delivered of a boy a few hours after, without one friend to support or console her, at a period when the agonies of her mind surpassed what nature has allotted the female frame to sustain in these severe circumstances.

No answer having been returned to her letter (owing to the cause I have already mentioned) she immediately concluded herself totally abandoned; and began most fervently to hope she should not long endure that accumulation of woes under which she laboured: an uncommon sensation of weakness, bordering almost on a state of infancy, convinced her of her approaching dissolution; and she regarded her release not only without dismay, but with eagerness and satisfaction.

In this situation her most earnest wish
was

was to embrace her parents before her death; to explain whatever appeared criminal and unaccountable in her conduct; and, having committed her children to their care, from whom alone she now expected justice and protection for them, to breathe her last sigh in their arms.

She therefore besought the country-woman to carry a message to her father and mother, imploring them to deign to visit her before she expired: to this woman she likewise confessed all the particulars of her unhappy story, and besought her to tell them, that could she accuse herself of one crime, excepting that of having deserted them in their old age, for which she hoped she had been sufficiently punished, she should not have dared to request that satisfaction, the only one she would probably live to enjoy; and entreated them to believe, that the infant she had just brought into
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the world, owed its existence to an event neither criminal nor disgraceful.

The old people, stunned with this unexpected intelligence, knew not what to determine. They had long concluded their daughter lost and deluded; but their grief for her elopement was not unmixed with resentment at her misconduct. The circumstances in which she was restored to them, were far from arguing her innocence, and their first resolution was to abandon her to the fate they concluded she had merited; but parental tenderness almost instantly converted this unnatural intention into the most earnest desire of seeing her once more. To her protestations of purity, they gave little credit. But guilty as she is, said the old man, she is still our child, and her present misery obliterates her past crimes:—miserable have been our days since her fall—the sufferings are now become her own.

Nature,

Nature, however, pleaded so powerfully for their daughter in the breasts of the good couple, that as they hastened to the cottage, they could not help indulging some faint hopes, that, though appearances were so much against her, some alleviating circumstances might turn out in her favour.

It may not then be difficult to imagine what must have been their feelings, when, on being ushered to the side of the bed where she lay, their beloved child, unable to see them after a separation so melancholy for almost six years, gave a feeble shriek, and fainted away.

In this state of insensibility she continued so long that they gave her up for gone; but having sent for a neighbouring surgeon, who administered every assistance possible, they had at length the satisfaction of seeing her open her eyes once more. They immediately found, however, that though life was restored,

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it was not in human power to recover her from a violent delirium with which she was instantly seized. The doctor declared her in a high fever, which being attended with mortal symptoms, gave the most alarming cause for apprehending the worst.

The situation of the unfortunate parents, who saw themselves on the point of losing their daughter almost in the very instant that they had recovered her, cannot possibly be described. She was perfectly insensible to them and all about her, during the whole day; and raved with a frantic wildness which it was horrible to witness; often calling on my name and imploring my compassion in the most piteous manner. Her father having at one time approached her, the disorder of her imagination made her instantly conceive it to be the accursed author of all her miseries, and throwing herself suddenly out of bed, in spite of
every

every opposition, she fell at his feet, imploring him not to murder her nor her infant: her angelic temper never once breathed an expression of resentment nor revenge, but her lips muttered unceasing complaints, and she perpetually repeated, I am just going to die, my Lord, wont that satisfy you? Ah spare my children!

The woman of the house being unable to manage her, and her weeping parents totally disabled by grief from assisting, she was obliged to call in some of the neighbours, who could only constrain her by force to remain in bed.

Nature could not long sustain a conflict so violent; nor can I, my children, force myself to dwell upon a scene, the idea of which inflicts unmitigated torture.

A few hours wore entirely out what little strength remained; and after having lain some time quiet, her senses were restored to her. She recollected the
message

message she had dispatched to her parents, and enquired composedly, tho' with a voice almost exhausted, what answer had been delivered.

They, who were no farther than at the foot of the bed, could not any longer restrain themselves from rushing into her arms, and embracing her as she lay. Their tears prevented them from articulating; but their daughter, who approached her last hour, was too feeble even to weep.

Oh, my beloved parents! cried she, with a hollow voice, which her breathing often rendered interrupted, I shall now die contented, since I have the satisfaction of expiring in your arms. I hope God will forgive my undutiful conduct towards you. Alas! you see how I have suffered for it. But I hope — may I trust you never could believe that I had thrown a stain on the virtuous education I received from your care. Indeed — indeed — I am innocent, and
really

really married. My asserting it at a moment so solemn, ought alone to convince you of the truth of this assurance; but, if more is necessary, I am in possession of the most certain and convincing proofs.

She then ordered the country-woman to deliver to her parents a packet which she had sealed, and committed to her charge, on being first taken ill: it contained the certificate of our marriage, and several letters written and signed by my own hand, which plainly proved that I regarded her as my wife.

I trusted him because I loved him, continued she; but in spite of the strictest ties, you see he has abandoned and deserted me, and I am going to atone with my life for the anguish my rash step must have given you in your old days. Indeed the idea of your uneasiness wholly embittered any short gleams of comfort I might otherwise have enjoyed;
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and transient indeed have these been since I left you. The only circumstance which yielded me any consolation in all my distresses, was the delightful hope, that the day would come when I should exultingly reveal all to you, and recompence you and myself by making the old age of my beloved father and mother affluent and happy.

That day, repeated she, after a pause, will never arrive; and perhaps it is a just punishment from Heaven for having deserted you; in which case, as my repentance is most sincere for that and all my transgressions, I trust in God it will be graciously accepted, and that I shall find in the grave that peace to which my bosom has been so long a stranger. But oh, my dearest father and mother, all my fears are for you; to me, death is a release from misery; since I retain no longer the affections of Lord Linrose, I preserve nothing that
attaches

attaches me to life. I feel, indeed, for my three infants, but while my mother survives, I am certain they will never know the loss of their own; and I hope they will neither inherit my weaknesses nor my misfortunes. Oh, may it please the Almighty to deliver them from imbibing one particle of their cruel father's hardness of heart.

The old people folded her alternately in their arms, and mingling tears with their blessings, assured her of their perfect forgiveness, and entreated her to live for their consolation.

Oh! my dearest parents! cried she, how can you wish me so ill! distract me not, I beseech you, with your despair! God knows if I am really so near my end as I imagine, but I feel myself inwardly gone, and so exhausted, that I think the struggle must soon be over. She then recapitulated the melancholy circumstances of her misfortunes as well

as weakness would allow her; but having wholly exhausted herself, she mentioned being extremely drowsy, and kissing her infant, perhaps it may be for the last time, said she; do not quit my bedside, my dearest mother, while I sleep; and stretching forth her hand, already bedewed with the damp of death, she grasped her mother's with a feeble effort, and recommending herself to Heaven, in that attitude composed herself to a repose from which she never awoke. Her sleep, at first agitated and disturbed, soon subsided into a lethargic stupor, and she expired at midnight without a sigh.

Think, my children, what this recital costs me. It is worse than death to write! To think on such a scene—to think—God of Heaven! that I was the accursed murderer of that suffering angel! that my hands dealt the fatal blow which stabbed her to the heart!

Oh!

Oh! my daughters! be not overpowered with horror. Let not, at least, a compassion too just for your hapless mother's fate, wholly obliterate from your bosoms that regard which your father has hitherto enjoyed. The benignant saint, I trust, accepts the tribute of that bitter remorse which has clouded the remainder of my days, and now rejoices in that blessed reward which her merit and her calamities so justly claim in a more glorious state of existence.

I now hasten to conclude the horrid tale; and return to myself, on that dreadful evening when your mother's letter was put into my hands.

Her sufferings, unutterable as they proved, being unimbittered with the agonizing pangs of remorse, could hardly surpass mine during that miserable night. My feelings were, if possible, heightened by the absolute necessity of concealing what I endured, under a smiling countenance;

nance; this, however, I could only hope to effect by the assistance of wine, which I poured down in quantities, in hopes of drowning care and stifling conscience.

To augment my distress, which intoxication, without bereaving me of my senses, could but little allay, on returning to the company, I found them in all the enjoyment of mirth and innocence. The music had been conveyed from the lawn to the saloon; and the moment I appeared, I was solicited to join the dance. Too conscious to refuse, I was constrained to cover my anguish by assuming an air of gaiety, the most forced and unnatural. Happily the company were too much engrossed with themselves, and the amusement in which they were engaged, to observe me; but the dance being ended, Lady Linrose, my beloved Lady Linrose approached me.

She enquired in a tender whisper,
why

why I had so long secluded myself from the company, and expressed her fears lest I was ill; for which apprehension my pallid look, and an agitation not to be disguised, gave but too much cause. I answered her, as composedly as I could, that I had a severe head-ach, which dancing had encreased. She then besought me, with an anxiety that stabbed me to the soul, to fatigue myself no more: and carelessly repeating that it was a complaint to which I had been liable from my infancy, I turned from her the moment I could do so without appearing abrupt.

Good heavens! cried I to myself, into what a gulph of misery have my ungoverned passions plunged me! And what would your sufferings be, most amiable, most beloved of women! did you know the injury I have done you. Were the fatal tale to reach your ears, how would your present tenderness in-

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stantly

stantly be converted into contempt and detestation.

These tormenting ideas made me avoid her the whole evening: and I dreaded the hour of retirement, lest, when we were alone, she should observe my distress, and renew her enquiries. My pretence of illness, however, was easily admitted by her unsuspecting mind; and I pretended to sleep, while my feelings were in a state which would admit of nothing like repose.

Next morning a party on horseback was proposed, and agreed to by all but myself. I excused myself on account of business; intending to take that opportunity to get rid of my friends, and perform my promised visit to your mother, severe as was the task.

I knew not exactly the cottage in which she had taken up her abode; but concluding it would not be difficult to find,

find, I resolved to begin the search as soon as the company were set out.

One of the ladies, who was extremely gay, importuned me with eagerness during breakfast to postpone my business for at least one half hour, and accompany her with one or two more of my friends in a walk to the extremity of the park, to give my opinion of a situation for a rustic temple, which she had advised my Lord to erect on a particular spot beyond the park gate; after which they meant to join the rest of the party, and pursue their morning rambles together.

Conscious guilt made me agree to the proposal, as I supposed I should be soon afterwards at liberty; and I accordingly followed the young lady and my father, attended by Mr. Bensley, who was the friend to whom I was most tenderly attached, and indeed the one who most merited my confidence and friendship,

and accompanied by my dear Lady Linrose, who hung on my arm as we walked along, vainly endeavouring by the softness of her attentions to soothe an uneasiness, the cause of which she could not penetrate.

Just as we got out of the park, we observed a good looking young woman, who suckled an infant, at the door of a cottage which stood directly on the road side.

That little thing appears hardly out of the egg shell, said Lady Linrose in passing. How comes it, good woman, that you expose it to the air so early?

Indeed madam, replied the woman, because it breaks my heart to enter the house. The mother of this child expired this morning; and her old father and mother are at this moment lamenting over the body in so piteous a manner, that it would melt a heart of stone to witness their distress.

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These words made me shudder with the most dreadful apprehensions. But I was endeavouring to persuade the ladies, who were greatly interested by this mournful tale, to walk on, pretending great haste, when a figure presented itself to our view, which instantly arrested their steps and rendered me motionless with horror.—It was the old man himself, the father of your mother; who having perceived me from the window of the cottage, in the frenzy of his despair, rushed out upon us. His aged withered face was pale with grief, and his whole frame shook with rage. Addressing himself instantly to me—Come in here, detested wretch! cried he; come in here, and contemplate your work: see here the fruits of your villainy in the destruction of my darling child, your true and lawful wife; who lies here sacrificed by your treachery, and murdered by your own hands.

I heard no more: but uttering an exclamation of horror, fell insensible on the ground. Lady Linrose, shrieking with terror, threw herself by my side to support me, and Bensley, who was more able for the task, held me in his arms as I lay.

I almost instantly recovered my senses: but unable to stand the horrid explanation which I knew must follow; unable at that moment, when the keenest remorse began to pierce my bosom and wholly unfitted me for dissimulation, to vindicate my innocence or even to attempt the slightest appearance of defence, while the old man's assertion was too strongly corroborated by the effects it had produced, I kept my eyes still shut, and pretended to remain in a state of insensibility.

My father stood in mute astonishment at this scene, too much confounded to unravel what it meant. The farmer's
frantic

frantic violence he might have conceived to be the sudden consequences of insanity; but the situation into which his words had thrown me, gave no small degree of credibility to what he had uttered, wild and extravagant as were his expressions.

What does all this mean? cried he to the farmer.

It means, returned the old man, that your son, my Lord, is a villain! yes, a perjured villain! He has married another, when my daughter has been lawfully his wife above six years, and she this morning expired a victim to his cruelty and crimes.

Oh horrible! exclaimed Lady Linrose; abominable wretch! how, my Lord, can you tamely submit to hear that frantic old man utter falsehoods so infamous and impossible?

Infamous it is, cried the farmer; would to heaven it had also been impossible.

ble: then had I at this instant rejoiced over a long lost and adored child, instead of mourning her miserable end in tears and distraction. Oh my Lord! continued the old man, subdued by grief, which now succeeded to rage and indignation, throwing himself on his knees at my father's feet, from your character I dare hope for justice: you shall speedily be convinced that my innocent child has been deluded in the most shameful manner; and mean as is our rank, her fame must and shall be vindicated.

He then presented a paper to my father, which he entreated him to peruse. It was the certificate of my marriage with your mother; and my Lord, who by this time began to be somewhat staggered, appeared infinitely shocked on hastily throwing his eyes over the contents.

Farmer, said he, hesitating, and in much agitation, I believe my son may have injured your daughter; in which
case

case all the reparation she could have claimed, or you now can ask, shall be granted you; but as to his having made her his wife, that is an assertion which she has evidently invented to save her credit with you after her fall, and the falshood of such a pretence is enough to persuade you that she has not been without her share of the guilt. My son is, as you see, sufficiently affected with the unfortunate catastrophe, and I am very far from vindicating his conduct; on the contrary, all that can now be done to appease and console you is undoubtedly his duty; but in what manner this is to be effected, we must afterwards consider. I shall take another opportunity of talking with you on this subject.

Come, Madam, said he to Lady Linrose, who, breathless with apprehension, had remained during this conversation in all the stupor of silent horror. Pray lean on my arm, and let us be gone from
this

this place. Let us leave my son to the care of his friend. He is in no situation to justify himself at present. We ought therefore to suspend our opinion of his behaviour till he can explain matters fully. *All* that he is accused of is utterly impossible.

Young men, even the very best of them, continued he, as he obliged her unwillingly to walk away, supported by his arm and accompanied by her companion, are but too prone to vices which in the more advanced periods of their lives they reflect on with regret and remorse. As to the ridiculous story of the marriage, I hope it gives you not the smallest uneasiness.

I cannot leave him thus, cried Lady Linrose, whose voice now burst through the sobs and tears which had stopped her utterance. But my Lord urged her strongly; and her friend so earnestly besought her to leave me to Bensley's care, that

that she at last unwillingly attempted to go, though she often reverted her eyes, and was yet in sight, though at some distance, when Bensley saw her drop on the ground.

As soon as the ladies departed with my father, I opened my eyes. The farmer darted a look of enraged indignation at me, and walked sorrowfully into the cottage almost immediately; before the door of which this dreadful scene had been transacted, and into which the woman and child had retreated at the beginning; though I perceived that she had brought more than one face to the window to remark the consternation into which the company had been thrown.

Only my friend Bensley therefore remained; and even him I dreaded to look on, though he laboured to soothe me with words of comfort. Oh, Bensley! cried I, as soon as I could find courage to speak, lead me from this spot, where
every

every object conveys horror inexpressible! I will explain all to you hereafter; but at present my mind is incapable of talking, thinking, or acting for myself!

Would you return to the castle? cried he.

Oh! God! any where but to the castle. Hide me for ever from all beneath its roof, and most from my amiable, my injured—

I dared not add, *wife*: my lips at that moment of anguish refused to bestow that appellation, except on the still more injured deceased.

I supported myself on my friend's arm, and shame supplying the place of strength, we were soon out of sight of the cottage, and of Lady Linrose.

Tell me, cried Bensley, as we walked slowly on, tell me I entreat you, what all this means? I confound myself in vain to unravel the mystery. What am I to think of the situation in which I see you?

you? I perceive you accuse yourself of the poor girl's death. But country girls don't break their hearts from having made a false step; and it may have been with much more probability merely owing to the circumstances of her situation; in which case, though you have certainly reason to reproach yourself, if she was innocent and seduced, yet there may be many alleviating circumstances to reconcile you to yourself, and to excuse you even in the eyes of Lady Linrose.

Oh Bensley! mention not her name! (covering my face with my hands as if terrified at the idea of beholding her.)

Good heavens! my Lord, what do you mean?

I mean, that she has not, and *never*, *never* could have had a title to that name.

God in heaven! what do you tell me? exclaimed he in horror. What is it you force me to suspect?

Talk not on this subject, cried I; I
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am unable to bear it. Would to God that the earth could open under my feet and swallow within its bowels a wretch unworthy to crawl on its surface.

For heaven's sake endeavour to compose yourself, my dear Linrose, cried he. But where do you intend going?

I answered, to town; where I could more easily bury myself from the world, and hide my head from every eye that had a chance of recognizing me.

Benseley then entreated me to moderate the transports of my despair, and to walk forward towards a village, where horses could be provided. This he could not for some time prevail on me to attempt; but at last, the desire of secluding myself induced me to wish to be in London as soon as possible; and we made the most of our way till we approached near the village. My friend, tho' afraid to leave me by myself in that situation of mind, after vainly striving to calm the
tumults.

tumults of my distraction, and receiving my solemn promise to attempt no act of violence in his absence, then departed to provide a post chaise from the inn. I confess that had not my oath withheld my arm when I was left alone, I was hardly enough master of myself to have resisted the temptation of putting a period to my existence; but Bensley, who dreaded the wildness of my despair, hastened the execution of his orders, and soon returned to me in the carriage.

We travelled post, for my friend would not desert me in that moment of affliction, and procured lodgings the most private in an obscure part of the city. Instead of upbraiding me, he performed unceasingly the kindest offices of friendship; and perceiving me sufficiently penetrated with a sense of the criminality and weakness of my conduct, and entirely overpowered by the calamities which had resulted from it, not to myself

self alone, but to those I passionately loved, and indeed to all who were connected with me, he not only forbore to probe my wounds too severely, but exerted himself to plan what steps I ought next to pursue; and I, who was unable to think for myself, received a feeble ray of satisfaction on finding I still possessed a friend who would not abandon me, and that my crimes had not made this earth completely a desert to me.

Immediately on my arrival, I was seized with a violent fever attended with a delirium, in the intervals of which I heartily wished the disease might prove the termination of all my distresses. My friend, who never quitted my bed side, on this occasion wrote, by my desire, a letter to my father, acquainting him with my situation, and confessing to him every circumstance of my misconduct. This I had no intention now of concealing; and a full confession of the truth, in my situation,

situation, was the only virtue I could testify. Benseley informed him, that unable to shew my face to the world, or again to meet the eyes of the woman I had so unpardonably, so irreparably injured, from the violence of a passion which knew no bounds and would give way to no restraints, and sensible that I merited only scorn and abhorrence from her, I was firmly determined, should I recover, which was an event he well knew I heartily wished never might take place, to spend the remainder of my days in a foreign country, and to bury myself in solitude and obscurity, where my name should be unheard of and my crimes unknown.

To this my father returned an answer dictated by all that resentment I had so justly incurred. He desired Benseley to inform me, that my offences were of a nature that reflected not only infamy on myself but disgrace and contamination
on

on all who had the misfortune of being allied to me: that he had endeavoured all in his power, not from regard to my fate but from anxiety to preserve the family honour untarnished, to persuade the farmer and his wife to silence, in hopes that the horrid train of iniquity which had led to such calamities, might be at least in part a secret from the world: but the old people, above being either bribed or soothed into this measure, held their determination unalterable of vindicating the injured fame of their deceased daughter, and were in possession of sufficient evidence to prove the truth of that unmanly and detestable transaction: that for his part, he could not help approving their inflexibility, and was not even certain if he was justifiable in having attempted to screen a wretch, though his own son, from the assured consequences of blasted and irretrievable honour, which ever receives

its due punishment in the contempt, abhorrence, and desertion of the world; and which being driven from society and shunned by mankind, is forced to hide its miserable head in obscurity, where not one ray of comfort alleviates the just though rigorous sentence.

Happy had it been, continued his Lordship, for his whole family, had he breathed his last ere he cast so foul a stain on all connected with him. As to his present illness, all that can be wished for by his unfortunate relations is, that time may be granted him to repent of the many evils into which his misconduct has involved them and himself. He next mentioned Lady Linrose. My dear Lady Linrose! At the sound of her name I shuddered. Let me know no further, cried I to Bensley, whom I had constrained unwillingly to read aloud the letter to me: yet the next moment my anxiety being insupportable, I insisted on
hearing

hearing all. She had been violently ill, had been given over by her physicians, and was still in the most alarming situation, though for the present the fever appeared to have given way to medicine. But what was even ten thousand times worse than this, and rendered me absolutely frantic with despair, her mind no less than her tender frame had suffered. She never had been herself since that fatal, that accursed day. If the wretch, said my father in his letter, is insensible to the many shocking calamities which his crimes have produced, you may add to the list that of having driven to madness the loveliest and most amiable of her sex.

In the state I then was, it may easily be concluded that a severe relapse could not fail to be the consequence of this dreadful information; and it was more than once my intention to put a final period to my existence by my own hand; but]

but Heaven interposed to save me from an action which would have filled up the measure of my iniquities, and my friend at length brought me to a more temperate frame of mind.

During this period, an old servant, who is since dead, whom I had ever considered more on the footing of a friend than a domestic, as he had once known better days, and had attended me from my youth, contrived, by what means I know not, to discover the place of my concealment. He had been left with the rest of my attendants at the Castle: but on hearing of my misconduct, easily conjecturing my situation, his faithful attachment determined him to find me out, and to entreat my acceptance of his attendance in whatever part of the globe I should fix my residence. He had in some particular instances regarded himself as under peculiar obligations to me; and with a gratitude and fidelity rarely

to be met with in higher and more refined spheres, resolved to attach himself to me. By his means I learnt every minute circumstance of the death of your mother, and all the particulars which preceded that dismal event. He had gained his intelligence from the woman who possessed the cottage; and answered my interrogatories with an accuracy which I never should have received from other hands, and which must have augmented my despair, had that been possible.

As soon as I was able to reason or reflect with any sort of composure, Bensley brought you, my beloved children, to me, which was indeed the only shape which comfort could have assumed to touch my heart. The sight of my Hermione, whose countenance recalled her injured mother strongly to my mind, and in whose infant features the expression of her mother's sweetness and her virtues were strikingly marked, brought the
soothing

soothing relief of tears, the first that despair had permitted to flow; and the only idea which afforded any thing like satisfaction to my soul, was the resolution of retiring abroad with my children, and devoting the rest of my life to their education; to fortify their minds with such principles as might deter them from guilt and deliver them from calamities like their father's. This employment I considered as the only satisfaction I could offer to the memory of your unfortunate mother, and I flatter myself that if she could look down, it would give her angelic mind pleasure even in paradise, to behold me instilling into the minds of her children, sentiments congenial with her own.

This determination my father approved, and informed Benzeley, who acted as agent between us, that he would settle an annual pension upon me, for which I was to sign a formal resignation

of all claims to what might have devolved to me at his death, and which would spare him the mortification of dreading any litigation in future between me and my brother, who on this dismal event had been reinstated in his Lordship's favour, and with his wife and a numerous family, were recalled from Ireland, the place of his constant residence ever since his limited finances had constrained him to leave the army.

I stipulated, in place of the pension, for twenty thousand pounds; which sum was placed in the funds, and the annual interest has been remitted to me by Bensley since my residence here, with all the zeal of sincere friendship. Through his means I made enquiry also about my little infant boy, whose birth had been marked by events so dreadful; and had the misfortune to learn that he survived not above a fortnight, and the old people mourned their daughter's death once
more

more in the loss of the child she had bequeathed to their care.

To that miserable old couple, whose days I had loaded with unmitigated sorrow, I remitted every year a certain sum, by unknown hands, being conscious that from the hated hands of the murderer of their child, they never would have accepted the gift. But within five years after my departure, Benfeley informed me that the pension was no longer necessary; a fever having carried off the old man in his seventieth year, and his wife followed him a few months after.

My melancholy relation now draws towards a conclusion; for as soon as my illness would admit of a removal, I bid adieu to England for ever. It was not, you may easily conceive, my children, without feelings unspeakably painful, that I departed; nor without a tear which wrung my heart, that I was separated from Benfeley. Though tenderly at-

tached to you both, the only ties which connected me with mankind, you were but in infancy; and your innocent prattling, interesting as it was to the partial ears of a father, could yet but ill supply the society of a friend tried and approved. With a mind so unfitted for reflection, my solitude must at first have been insupportable, had I not regarded every pang I endured as a just penance for offences hardly to be expected, and never to be forgotten.

Submission to Heaven, and a proper sense of that religion which leads even the greatest criminals to trust for pardon if penitent, has supported me, and my sufferings have now subsided into a settled melancholy; which at times has even something not unpleasing in it, and which admits of all the rational comforts of life, in the enjoyment of the society of my children, and even a delight in contemplating the success of my labours
for

for their improvement. But these satisfactions must ever be mixed with that alloy which remembrance mingles with every rising consolation. This temper renders my company little amusing to those whom accident has introduced to my acquaintance, and on the other hand wholly unfits me for intercourse with the world; so that I have continued to live from choice in a retirement which has been only once enlivened by a kind visit of some months from my dear Bensley, and within these two years by the agreeable society of my friend Mr. Howard, whose acquaintance and friendship I regard as a signal favour from heaven to soothe and console me. He has indeed beguiled many a lonely hour by the mild good sense of his conversation—hours which otherwise would have proved dismal and iiksome; for where reflection gives no comfort, time fails of its usual power of lulling pain.

Immediately on my departure, I assumed the name of Seymour, that no trace might remain to lead any of my former acquaintance to the knowledge of my abode. Even the good woman Mrs. Benton, whom Benzeley procured to take charge of you as governess, knew me but under that borrowed appearance, and was ignorant to her death of the truth. That event, which happened some years after I settled at B——, obliged me unwillingly to send you to the convent of —— for further instruction in the different branches of education, instead of supplying her loss by another tutress in the same line; for though this might have been perhaps procured, I knew not where to apply: Benzeley was not at that time in a situation, from various circumstances, to exert himself in finding a person properly qualified, and he was the only one on whom

whom I could rely in a matter of such infinite moment.

I did not think myself at liberty to deprive either of you of the little accomplishments of your sex; the principal advantages resulting from which are the amusement they bestow in solitude; neither did I consider it as allowable to seclude you from forming those soft ties and delightful connections of friendship, with girls of your own age, which are the growth of that happy period of our lives and almost belong solely to it; while on the other hand, besides parting from you for so long a space of time, I was under great apprehensions lest your infant minds should be tinged, during your abode in the monastery, with the errors of the catholic persuasion.

I determined, however, to place you there for two years, and I bless Heaven I have had reason in no respect to regret the sacrifice I made for Hermione's im-

provements, nor shall I, I trust, in future for that of my dear Fanny.

I am now come to the conclusion of my painful recital. Adieu! my beloved children! when these lines are presented to your view, I trust you will draw that veil over my errors, with which affection ever softens and obscures the perception of the faults of those we love. I do not wish you to excuse my conduct: do not attempt it; for of none will it admit. Abhor my crimes; but try to distinguish your father from his transgressions, and preserve if possible for my memory, that unabated tenderness and duty which have constituted the sole consolation of a life worn out with remorse, and devoted to repentance—a repentance, the sincerity of which Heaven, I trust, has accepted.

Should the Almighty take me to himself before you have engaged yourselves

selves protectors in the married state, my friend Bensley has faithfully engaged to be a second parent to you: to him, therefore, I bequeath you; and I desire that you may ever regard him as my successor in your obedience and affections. On him you may safely rely, who would have saved your father from destruction had he profited from his example, and who saved him from despair though he slighted and neglected it. I am not without hopes that your grandfather, though too justly irritated against me, may through my friend's medium receive you to his favour, when the idea of my existence no longer disturbs the repose of his declining days; and I enclose a letter to him, which I desire may be presented by your own hands.

Once more adieu, my beloved children! may the great God of Heaven graciously attend to the prayers I daily
pour

pour forth for your integrity and welfare;
and may he ever defend you under the
shadow of his wings from harm and
calamity; but above all, from those
which result from misconduct.

LINROSE.

LET,



LETTER II.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

SEPT. 26, —.

I HAVE received your kind letter, my beloved friend; the most agreeable circumstance that could have befallen me at present, when my heart, exhausted and depressed, can imbibe consolation or relief from the tender sympathy of friendship alone.

How just are your reflections, my Sophia, on our dear father's unhappy story. Surely a sense so rigorous of his errors, and so many years devoted to penitence and remorse, must not only have entirely obliterated his faults in the eyes

eyes of infinite justice and mercy, but ought to render every candid mind compassionate and indulgent to transgressions which conveyed so severely their own punishment.

What a number of circumstances, unheeded at the time, do Fanny and I now recall, that prove how bitterly he suffered. The gravity and seeming austerity of his manners, which you used to say made him appear so awful that you never could feel at ease in his presence, we concluded merely constitutional: alas! we suspected not that his melancholy had a source so deep, nor that a weight of painful recollections gave a heaviness to his heart, which deprived every enjoyment of its true relish, and could not fail to throw a gloom over his whole appearance; especially in the eyes of my gay, animated Sophia, blessed with a mind at ease, and in possession of
all

all the vivacity which youth, health, and lively spirits can produce.

Yet, my dear, religion and resignation had effected in him a mild thoughtfulness, which, while it repressed gaiety, was far from wholly precluding contentment. His temper was indeed so serene, so amiable, so free from all caprice or ill humour, and his conversation so instructively amusing, so complaisantly indulgent to all the little whims and wishes of his children, that our affection for him, warm and unbounded, was untinged with dread or awe; and we ever regarded him in the light of an agreeable and entertaining companion, while we revered him as that of a condescending and respectable parent.

Has not the woeful tale drawn tears from you, my dear? As for Fanny and myself, I thought the perusal would have actually killed us. Oh! what a number of dreadful events, unsuspected and unknown,

known, what a source of never ceasing regret, has it opened to our knowledge; and what a period of misery have the days of our dear father proved! ought we then to weep his release from a world where sorrow, under various shapes, has been his constant pursuer, and where, under the baneful form of remorse, it has conducted him to the grave.

I hope my Sophia has not been uneasy at the unusual interval of silence, after the last dismal part of my journal, which I think I sent off about six weeks ago. The truth is, I have had a severe relapse since that period. Nervous fevers are, you know, extremely liable to return when one concludes the alarm over, and caution unnecessary; and this fit of illness was not only attended but produced by a dejection of spirits so depressing, that I am astonished I have been able to survive what I have suffered. This last attack was indeed so violent, that my
physicians

physicians thought me for several days in extreme danger, and shook their heads in silence, while poor Fanny gave me up for lost.

It has pleased the Almighty, however, to restore me; though I am yet so languid that I scarce feel as if I had existence: but I am infinitely better than I could have conceived possible in so short a space; and the relief Fanny's mind has received from this event, has almost wholly recovered her usual good spirits: her terrors on my account, by dividing her attention and engrossing her anxiety, have abstracted her thoughts from the past, and her escape from a still greater calamity, for such undoubtedly my death must have proved at this juncture, when we are left in a manner deserted and alone, has produced a wonderful change in her dejection. Her timidity of temper, even to helplessness, renders her so dependant on me, and so totally unfits
her

her for struggling against the difficulties of our unconnected situation, that my loss could be felt at no period so severely as the present.

I have considered some points in her temper, however, as very fortunate at this melancholy season; when to have endured the burthen both of her sorrows and my own, would have proved a weight under which my spirits must have completely sunk; but though exceedingly susceptible of strong agitations in the first moments of emotion, Fanny's feelings, probably from their violence, are extremely apt to evaporate, and when dissolved in tears and melted by affliction, the soothing of a friend, and a few unavailing arguments of comfort, seldom fail to wipe them very speedily away.

The sensations of sixteen, are in general I believe of this nature: acute but transient. I perceive my Sophia smiles at the important airs of seniority which
in

in this last sentence I seem to assume : but two years difference of age, at our time of life, claims more than will perhaps be admitted at any other period ; and Fanny's residence at the convent, from which she returned but a few months ago, and the seclusion that preceded it, have given an inexperienced simplicity to her conversation, and an innocent *naiveté* to her manners, which, though amiable and engaging, bestow sometimes an appearance of childishness that might lead one to conclude her still younger than she is.

SEPT. 28.

Madam de Clarence visited us this morning. It is ten days since she arrived in our neighbourhood, though we had not seen her ; but she sent many kind and friendly enquiries to know how we were

were going on, and informed us, in a short note, that indisposition alone could have prevented her from personally condoling with us on our bitter distress.

She expressed, in strong terms of affection, the warmest sympathy; and assured us, that had not a disorder similar to mine confined her to bed, she would have flown to afford us what support and consolation a warm participation in our feelings could bestow.

You know this lady is one of the few acquaintances whose company and conversation our dear parent was ambitious of our obtaining, and who, on her part, has always been so kind as to solicit our's whenever her chateau afforded gaiety and amusement.

She wept at the news of our intended departure for England. Alas! said she, your worthy father always told me, that in the event of his death the remainder of the days of his children would most
probably

probably be spent in their native country with his friends ; who, though displeased, as he has often hinted, at some part of his conduct, he doubted not would require your presence, and proffer their protection when he was no more.

Her kindness made our tears flow profusely ; but I thought myself only at liberty to inform her, that my father had indeed very near relations in his own country, (and mentioned his brother though not by name) to whom he had recommended us : adding, that though he had been so unlucky himself as to disoblige his family, we were in hopes they would not prove so cruel and unrelenting as to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children.

You carry a recommendation in your countenances, my dear girls, said she, kindly, the force of which few hearts can be hardened enough to withstand. My prayers shall follow you wherever
you

you go; and I hope you will have the goodness now and then to inform me, that they have not been offered up in vain.

She then departed, having exacted a promise that we would be her guests for a few weeks previous to our quitting France for ever.

Madam de Clarence is indeed the only individual, now your amiable aunt exists no more, besides our good old Superior and some of the sisters in the convent, whom on this occasion I can regret parting with; as she is the only person with whom my father's solitary plan of life has allowed of our forming an intimacy. Independent of the vicinity of her chateau to B——, the warm affection with which I loved her amiable daughter, our young convent friend, originally prepossessed her in my favour; and since her death, the worthy and afflicted mother appears to have transferred

transferred to me that maternal tenderness, which can exert itself no longer for the happiness of my friend.

My father had the best opinion both of her heart and understanding; and she alone (your dear aunt excepted, whose loss I hourly lament) possessed such influence over his mind as to obtain for us a few days amusement at her chateau once or twice a year: an indulgence which his respect for her character induced him to grant; but which he always granted unwillingly, and under apprehension that a taste for gaiety, so natural to youth, imbibed in such agreeable society, might render our usual abode, on our return, languid and uncomfortable.

Short, indeed, were these intervals of festivity, and they generally passed like a gay hour away. I used constantly to count the days till spring returned; which season always brought our amiable friend

friend from the dissipation of Paris to our peaceful neighbourhood. But unlike, alas! was her last arrival to those which had preceded it! Her beloved daughter accompanied her not! and on my first visit to the unfortunate mother, my unrepresed sympathy and affliction cemented a tender tie between us, which induced her almost to adopt me in the place of the amiable child, whom death had torn from her bosom.

I am convinced, had lingering illness afforded my father time for such a confidence, Madam de Clarence would have been intrusted with his secret; and that to her care and tenderness he would have recommended his children.

SEPT. 30,

I am sure it will give my Sophia pleasure to learn, that in our unfriended situation

tuation, the worthy Mr. Howard has most conscientiously fulfilled the promise exacted from him by my father in his dying moments. Having performed the last sad duties to that dear and beloved parent, he exerted himself to support and console poor Fanny, who felt herself, during my illness, on the brink of becoming a solitary being in the midst of the universe. He wrote, immediately on my father's death, to Mr. Benseley, who is nominated our guardian unless Lord Belmont condescends to take that trust on himself; and having informed him of our irreparable loss, added, ~~that~~ as we were committed to his charge, we expected from his hand to learn what plan of life we were now to pursue.

Mr. Benseley's answer arrived some time ago, and along with it a long letter addressed to me, which I was not however permitted to peruse till within these few days. He begins by lamenting, in

the most feeling manner, the severe stroke we have met with, and receives, he says, the trust bequeathed him as the most valuable legacy my father could have bestowed.

I have had the inexpressible misfortune, says he, to bury within these few months an amiable and beloved wife, with whom I might have lived in a state of the most perfect felicity that this world can offer, had I not allowed an ungrateful anxiety for one denied blessing to disturb my peace and cloud all my other enjoyments. Heaven had left me but one wish ungranted—the want of family: and I was so blind and impious, as to allow an unreasonable chagrin on this account to sour my relish for the many pleasures which remained. At length I beheld myself on the eve of having my anxious desire gratified: my wife brought into the world a son; but expired in giving birth to her infant, who survived her but a few

few days ; and I am taught the duty of contentment at the severe price of finding myself bereaved of all earthly felicity.

I receive, he adds, the children of my friend, as sent to console me for my misfortunes. I intend to adopt them for my own, and I hope, while I religiously fulfill my part of their father's will, they will not be negligent in the performance of the duties that belong to them; but will regard me in the soothing light of a parent, in which my late friend has introduced me to their acquaintance.

Hasten then to England, my dear children, concludes he. I hope you will have no objection to join the family of an infirm old man, who, though depressed by grief, and racked by the ailments and infirmities incident to a feeble constitution and declining years, preserves the utmost tenderness and indulgence for youth. I trust your friend, Mr. Howard, will transact all the necessary business

that ought to have employed your guardian, had he been able to have ventured on so long a journey; an exertion which bad health and debilitude totally prevent him from attempting; perhaps, if Mr. Howard means not to remain abroad for any length of time, he may even contrive to accompany you to your native country, and deliver up in safety his charge to the old friend who impatiently expects their arrival.

Is not this indeed acting the part of a parent, my dear Sophy? what an amiable and engaging old man Mr. Bensley must be. I long extremely to see him, and anxiously wish to endeavour, by the utmost duty and attention, to soothe his sorrows, and to render his old age comfortable and happy. Though we never, never can supply the place of what he has lost, may not the society and attachment of two young girls, anxious to please and willing to submit to all his
little

little humours, gratify and amuse him, although we may not be able sufficiently to interest his affections. I hope so at least. I am sure I shall feel infinite satisfaction in performing a thousand little services to him, from the idea that my father so earnestly wished us to regard him as his representative.

Oh, Sophia! what strange reverses have two short months produced! what a revolution in my mind! to leave B—the abode of our youth—and to leave it without the smallest prospect of ever revisiting it again; where every surrounding object, the very trees which rear their lofty heads so high before the window at which I am writing, appear in the light of old friends who claim a tear at parting.

While I continue in this spot, where we have so constantly enjoyed my dear father's presence, though I miss him every moment, I cannot help fancifully feeling that I am not yet quite deprived of him.

'Tis losing all that remains of him, to leave this his constant residence, where every thing I see is connected with his idea. Yet how gloomy, how languid does every thing around appear! perhaps remembrance will be less painful when I am not surrounded by scenes which recall him perpetually to my mind in the most endearing views.

Fanny and I have upbraided ourselves more than once for these ungrateful complaints, which during our private walks we used sometimes to indulge, on being so wholly excluded society, and in a manner detached from the rest of our species. Alas! we are thoroughly punished for our folly; for never till now did we feel what solitude was. Our books, work, music, drawing, and a thousand other amusements, and that which we relished above them all—the conversation of our dear and indulgent parent, made the day ever appear too short for
the

the innocent pleasures it bestowed. How different, alas! is the present, when his loss sheds a gloom on every hour, and time creeps with a dreary languid pace, because we carry to every employment no spirits for exertion, and minds unfitted for entertainment.

Indeed I can give no reason for these discontented ideas having occurred to our minds, one excepted, which I ought to blush to confess, though I really believe it was the original source of an eager desire to see something more of the world than our way of life and my father's rules had hitherto permitted.

You must know, that at the convent Fanny was extremely intimate with a young girl, much about her own age, who was very gay, very enterprizing, and very fond of novels. That species of reading you know was prohibited, and no books of a romantic nature admitted within the grate. Fanny's young friend,

H 4

however,

however, contrived, through means of an indulgent relation who lived in the town, to be privately supplied with abundant gratification of this kind, and unknown to every one but Fanny, who soon imbibed the same taste, used to devour with eagerness all the fabulous stuff she could get conveyed into the convent. Fanny was alone in a secret, the fruits of which she sufficiently enjoyed, till one unlucky day, when some of the nuns unfortunately discovered the *Paysanne Parvenue* cunningly hid beneath the quilt of her bed; and after a severe punishment having been inflicted for the transgression, care was taken to prevent all possibility of its being repeated.

During a few days which Fanny passed at V——, in her way home, she contrived to expend all her pocket money on purchases of novels; and Madam de Clarence, who had undertaken to bring her thither, perceiving her fondness for
this

this kind of reading, presented her with several in vogue, so that on her arrival she brought with her a little library of romance, which opened a field entirely new to me, and which was so insinuating to a person whose amusement depended so much upon books as mine had ever done, that though my father disapproved our studies, it was not unusual for Fanny and I to retire to our favourite seat in the wood, and unknown to him employ ourselves for hours in this forbidden reading.

I recollected that it was not till after reading these fallacious relations of the universal and uncontrouled empire of love, and the alluring recitals of conquest, vanity, and fame, that Fanny and I began to suspect my father's description of life to be the effects of singularity of temper and taste: to own the truth however, these emotions of regret on being deprived of our chance for a share

in these pleasures, were but transient and left very little impression on our minds.

OCT. 4.

I am now almost perfectly recovered, my dear; and have been out more than once airing with Fanny, who is now as cheerful as ever, and talks of our journey to England (which is to take place as soon as I am able for such an undertaking) not only without uneasiness, but even with eagerness. A natural sensation of sorrow sometimes takes a momentary possession of her spirits at the idea of leaving Languedoc; yet the prospect of shifting the scene amuses and delights her. Happily for her it is not her turn of mind to view evils before they actually arrive; and she is totally blind on this occasion to the many mortifications and difficulties in which
our

our change of residence must involve us, and with which it is so intimately connected: for can we reasonably hope, Sophia, that our appearance will not revive the remembrance of all the unhappy circumstances of our birth: will not all our dear father's misfortunes again prove the topic of the idle and censorious, and must not we on that account prove a subject for criticism, curiosity, and observation.

Can we even expect that our grandfather, so severely exasperated against his son, and of course prejudiced unfavourably towards us, will be induced to regard, with an eye of indulgence, two girls whose unwished for arrival must renew all the pangs which this dreadful affair has cost him? Perhaps an advanced age, and length of time, may have lulled his sorrows to rest; perhaps too the world, occupied by other matters, may almost have forgotten an event that once "fed

its

its appetite for scandal;" how unwelcome then must an event prove, which awakens so cruelly Lord Belmont's remembrance, and revives the stain which he wishes to bury in eternal oblivion.

How can we then flatter ourselves that we, who unexpectedly appear only to wound and chagrin him, shall be properly acknowledged and supported? Oh no! my Sophia, he will abandon and desert us: or, thinking it excusable to make his grandchildren a sacrifice to family pride and family honour, he will plunge us into obscurity; where, entirely dependant on his will, we must languish out our days unnoticed and unknown.

You will accuse me, I know, of carrying my gloomy conjectures greatly too far; for while Mr. Benseley lives we can never know the want of a protector: but if Lord Belmont persists, which I think far from improbable, in forbidding our claim to his favour,
never

never shall we revive the recollection of my father's errors by attempting to prove our identity. This would be a step repugnant equally to delicacy and duty. What a figure, my dear, must we then make in a foreign country, for to us it certainly is so, strangers and unknown, disowned by those on whom we ought to depend, and vouched for by Mr. Bensley alone, who may not survive long; for he is an old man and afflicted with many disorders.

Fanny is blind to all those evils which she calls imaginary, and upon which I do not expatiate, though I gently point them out to her at a distance; for I wish not to damp her pleasing hopes; I only desire to fortify her mind against the gloomy reverse which is constantly before my own eyes, but which I hope is partly the effect of dejection. She cannot help flattering herself, she says, that natural affection may work so powerfully

erfully in Lord Belmont's breast, as to induce him gladly to receive us as his grandchildren, and anticipates, with all the vivacity of a lively imagination, that happy moment when we may embrace the venerable parent who yet survives.

Indeed the accounts which Mr. Howard gives us of Lord Belmont, in some measure authorise these sanguine hopes. He tells us, that though he never was himself in his company, he is well acquainted with his general character, which is that of being strictly and uniformly a man of honour and integrity. Though in his temper proud, stern, and inexorable, these blemishes are counterbalanced by great humanity and much warmth of affection; and though the austerity and formality of his manners render his society little courted, except by his particular friends, he is adored by his servants and dependants, and, if
not

not beloved, is universally respected by the world.

A strict regard to justice, said Mr. Howard, which is thought to influence Lord Belmont's mind in a superior degree, ought undoubtedly to induce him to acknowledge the daughters of his eldest son; who, both from their sex and peculiarity of situation, lay particular claim to his protection; but how pride and prejudice, which form no inconsiderable features of his Lordship's character, may prompt him on the other hand to act, is doubtful. However, certain it is Mr. Benseley will not relinquish his title to be your sole director, unless my Lord engages to receive you as he ought.

I confess I am afraid this is a measure not likely to be taken: but we must patiently wait the event. From Mr. Howard we have likewise learnt some further particulars relative to our own family.

family. Though personally unacquainted with any of the individuals of it, he has seen several of them, and remembers well this dreadful affair being for several months the topic of universal discussion. How little, said he, did I afterwards suspect my friend, Mr. Seymour, to be the man whose fate had occasioned such various reports and conjectures. Most people, it seems, believed him dead of the illness which had followed the discovery: and this rumour was probably spread, or at least tacitly confirmed by his friends; who must have regarded it as the most likely means of putting a speedy termination to all curiosity and speculation on the subject.

You may believe both Fanny and I anxiously enquired if any intelligence relating to the unfortunate Lady Linrose had ever come to his knowledge. Mr. Howard said, that all he knew
was

was from general report only; but a story which had excited so strongly the attention of the public, could scarcely be concealed in any of its particulars. Lady Linrose recovered her intellects, he said, (alas! in such circumstances, the return of reason can hardly be called a blessing); but after the severe shock she had received, finding herself unfit for society, she had left England and fixed her abode in the most private manner abroad. Mr. Howard next informed us, that my uncle, whom he had often occasionally seen, had been thoroughly reinstated, to all appearance, in my grandfather's favour; that he had two sons, and he believed two if not three daughters, and that in them Lord Belmont's affections were said to be as entirely centered as his wealth must necessarily be at his decease.

This part of the family then, you may believe, will not look with eyes of partiality

partiality on those who have some little claim to share in what they may have conceived to be solely their own: at least that is not an unnatural conclusion, and I have drawn it from a hint which Mr. Howard let drop with regard to my aunt, the present Lady Linrose, whom it appears he has heard accused of a very avaricious disposition. Unwilling, however, to prejudice us against so near a relation, he afterwards endeavoured to palliate what seemed to have fallen from him through a friendly apprehension that she might not be much rejoiced at our appearance and pretensions.

He even knows we expect, we wish for nothing. Contented with what my father has bequeathed us, thankfully would we relinquish every further claim, only to be considered as Lord Belmont's children, and favoured with his countenance. Fanny, however, who is following

lowing my pen, exclaims against this moderation, as she calls it, and protests she never will consent to the proposal. After having been so long buried in solitude she longs, she says, to make *some figure in the world*, (I give you her own words) to which our *birth* certainly entitles us; and far from being contented with the mere *notice* of our family, she shall not think that Lord Belmont acts up to his character of rigid honour if he does not in all respects place us on a footing with our cousins.

However my wishes with regard to society may have at times coincided with Fanny's, yet I never could perfectly comprehend what delight *figuring* in the world, as she calls it, was likely to bestow. Most women, I believe, though educated in the most sequestered solitude, may comprehend with ease the gratification resulting from the devoirs of the agreeable part of the other sex; for this
vanity

vanity is probably inherent in our natures, and forms a part of our original construction; but habit has made retirement not only agreeable, but so entirely to my taste, that if ever I have it in my power to choose my own way of life, I shall undoubtedly fix in the country; where I would indeed wish my abode to be occasionally enlivened by the company and conversation of a few amiable people of both sexes, (an advantage which we have been almost totally deprived of hitherto); but no enjoyment can I conceive in a promiscuous intercourse, in which the heart has no share.

My ideas of life (is not that your phrase my Sophia? who was ever much offended at the seclusion in which we were retained), have been imbibed wholly from my dear father, who indeed found it a path strewn with briars, and who, to render us contented with the plan he had adopted, laboured to represent

represent the world in its least alluring point of view, as fraught with snares, treachery, and crimes, where innocence was continually exposed to danger, and where friendship was almost unknown. That I have not given implicit faith to this account is entirely owing to my Sophia's livelier picture of society; who, placed in a happier sphere, feels not nor dreaded the evils which have been perpetually placed before our eyes. The two years I spent in the convent, (the remembrance of which I ever bless, as it first introduced to my heart the knowledge of these soft, interesting, and endearing ties of friendship, which never, my Sophia, shall time or absence diminish) could not fail to assist my father's wishes on this head.

Is it not singular, however, that having been fostered by the same hand, and reared on the same plan, Fanny's ideas and mine should prove so little similar;
and

and that the prospect of leaving France and changing our mode of life, should operate so differently on our minds. What in her gives spirit to every motion, and life to every look, fills my eyes with tears, and my heart with despondency and alarm.

Oh! my Sophia, my dearest friend, your continued affection alone sustains me under the troubles which at present oppress my heart; and your journal is, after heaven, my chief, indeed my only consolation! Although all chance of meeting seems at present as distant as ever, I endeavour to support my sinking spirits with the hope that perhaps this blessing may be in wait for me sooner than I expect; and that though the public capacity in which your father acts at Naples, must render that court his usual residence, yet that unforeseen events may oblige him to visit England, which fate seems to have determined shall be the
abode

abode of our future days, and in which place, since the death of your aunt, I begin to imagine there is infinitely greater probability of seeing you than at B—, where you now possess no longer that venerable relation to induce your father to re-visit our neighbourhood.

OCT. 6.

I promise you faithfully, my dear, to write as you desire, minutely and sincerely, every event of my life, in the same style of journalizing which we have continued so long. With what trifling occurrences have my epistles hitherto been filled: the scene now begins to grow more interesting; Heaven grant that those which follow may be unmarked with any thing extraordinary. The marvellous ever produces agitation, and I am born (constitutionally at least) for spending

spending my days in what you would call an insipid tranquillity. It is only for tempers like my Sophia's to live in a court and enjoy its bustle; such as mine, are calculated only for the smooth unruffled paths of life. Fanny partakes so much of your turn of mind in this particular, that she is quite elated with all the chimeras of a gay imagination; perpetually representing to herself in the liveliest colours the endless enjoyments of birth, affluence, and admiration: alas! never once does it occur to her the sad stigma which has deprived her of these advantages hitherto, and which must ever cast a cloud over them in future.

Adieu, my dear. I have an opportunity by a private hand of conveying to you this immense packet. 'Tis a friend of Mr. Howard's, who sets out for Naples from Marseilles in a few days. Oh how I envy the happy mortal who delivers it to my Sophia.

H. SEYMOUR.

P. S. I have opened my packet to add a few words more. We have just received a second letter from our worthy guardian, who informs us of a very melancholy event—the death of our uncle, my father's younger brother. Alas! what severe wounds has Lord Belmont lived to endure! Heaven in mercy grant that I survive not those I passionately love; rather, ah! infinitely rather, may it please his gracious Providence to take me early in life to himself. Yet is not this a selfish wish? What is it indeed but desiring that my sufferings should be abridged at the expence of the feelings of my friends.

LETTER III.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

OCT. 9.

YOU ask me several questions in your letter, which the number of informations I have had to give you, together with the many conjectures and reflections which our present situation naturally inspires, have, by engrossing my pen, prevented me from answering: for as I am yet but weak, I am able to write but little at a time, though chatting with you is the only employment that interests me. I now sit down therefore to answer your queries.

You ask me to tell you, in the first place,

place, what sort of man this Mr. Howard is, whom I have dignified so often with the epithets of amiable and worthy? you desire me to acquaint you with the following particulars, viz. his age, fortune, manners, and appearance; and mean while you tell me you offer up your prayers for his turning out young, handsome, rich, and agreeable; and last of all that he may possess *un coeur tendre*, in which case it must be out of nature, you say, for the youth to have spent near three months under the same roof with two *such* girls without becoming a slave to the charms of one of them.

I am somewhat afraid that Mr. Howard has really proved this same unnatural being: although he certainly is blessed with a very tender heart, and seems besides to have been prejudiced in our favour from the commencement of our acquaintance, which was produced by an accident, of which I am going to inform

you, since I have neglected my accustomed minuteness in this particular.

My father one evening, about three years ago, walking in the woods of B——, perceived a very fine horse, saddled, with all its accoutrements, grazing, with the bridle impending from its neck, without any appearance of an owner or attendant being near. Struck with the apprehension that he had probably thrown his master, my father traversed the different paths of the forest, in order to give him assistance in case it was required, and soon was led, by the sound of dismal groans, to the spot where the unfortunate traveller lay, supported by a footman, who was endeavouring, by his master's orders, to pull his arm into joint, which had been dislocated by his fall.

My father addressing himself to the stranger, who proved to be an Englishman, (a circumstance that perhaps gave
force

force to his natural humanity and benevolence) informed him that his house was but a quarter of a league distant, and requested he would suffer himself to be removed to it, where a surgeon could be soon procured to set the bone.

Mr. Howard, for he it was, after thanking my father for his fortunate assistance, gratefully accepted the offer, and sent his servant, by my father's desire, to order a carriage to convey him to the house, while another messenger was dispatched from B—— for a neighbouring surgeon. The operation was happily performed, and I exerted myself (Fanny being then at the convent) to render the habitation of the poor invalid as comfortable as his situation would permit. He was soon able to quit his apartment, and loaded us with acknowledgments for this accidental service; and my father, who rarely admitted company at B——, found himself insensibly

attached to our new acquaintance, and forgot his determination of flying the sight of his own countrymen in favour of Mr. Howard, who on his part soon conceived the warmest friendship for him.

He acquainted us that bad health had obliged him to try the waters of Barrege; and never having visited the Continent before, he intended, finding himself perfectly recovered, to make the tour of France and Italy before his return to England. He politely added, that he never should regret the interruption his plan had received from this accident, since it had been productive of an intimacy that had given him so much satisfaction.

My father's persuasions prevailed with him to lengthen his stay for several weeks after his confinement was at an end; and indeed he proved a most agreeable acquisition to our family party. He then departed, having faithfully promised on his

his return to take B—— in his way; and after an absence of a year and eight months, he fulfilled his intention, and had been for some time our guest when my dear father was taken from us.

As to his character, our helpless situation has developed it to us in the most amiable point of view. Steady and sincere in his attachment to my father, it has been productive of kindness and attention to us, beyond what we could have hoped for or claimed from so late an acquaintance: yet his friendship is testified by actions, not by protestations; for the modesty of Mr. Howard's nature is such, that our expressions of gratitude never fail to embarrass and distress him; and he seems to regard the trouble he receives, as a trust, the faithful discharge of which is a duty too indispensable to appear meritorious.

His countenance—(you see I go regularly through the list of your interrogatories)—

tories)—without being what one can pronounce handsome, is sensible, manly, and interesting, with an air of mildness which prepossesses you at first sight in his favour, and an expression which of all others is the most desirable—the look of a worthy honest character. He would possess also much the appearance of a man of fashion, or rather of a man who has been accustomed to elegant and polished society, did not a certain degree of diffidence and modesty shew that he made not the *grand tour* early enough in life to acquire that ease which an introduction into foreign company at a youthful period generally bestows: but on this head I can only judge from comparing him with some of the Parisian beaux who occasionally frequented the chateau de Clarence, and who, however inferior to Mr. Howard in point of understanding, I must acknowledge were his superiors in address.

Fortune

Fortune has been, alas ! as sparing as nature seems to have been prodigal of her gifts. Her avarice is by no means apparent in the figure Mr. Howard makes in this country ; but he confessed to my father that frugality alone enabled him to conceal it. As to his age—(pray do you imagine that my father would have consigned us to the care of a man of five and twenty ?) Mr. Howard adds, I dare say, twenty years more to that gay season of life. Time has not, it is true, imprinted any traces in his face which one could wish spared, for they denote benevolence rather than years : he looks considerably younger than he is ; and retains that spirit in his eye which in his youth would have been probably termed fire, though blended with infinite sweetness. Thus our guardian, you find, is not a giddy insinuating youth, who might have one day made Fanny and I pull caps ; but in fact a plain, worthy, mid-

dle-aged man, whose attachment is that of a parent not of an admirer.

I will freely confess to you however I have sometimes been led to suspect, from his behaviour, that he wished to render himself particularly agreeable to me, and that he originally distinguished me beyond my sister; perhaps this was the mere suggestions of secret vanity: if so, it was however an error which I by no means wished realized; for so much apprehension did it give me, that I could not help avoiding his company; and when in it, my manner uniformly testified coldness and reserve, from the apprehension that my father, (who always confessed that he could not *insure* the protection of his family after his death, tho' all other particulars he carefully centered in his own bosom) might be induced to overlook the difference of years from the partiality he entertained for his friend, and might use all his influence to prevail

vail with me to accept of a legal protection in that unfriended state to which his decease was ever liable to reduce us

I now however condemn this absurd fancy, which I almost blush to confess to you, and which I perceive to have been merely a chimera of my own brain, adopted God knows how, for I think his preference is plainly in my sister's favour, whose innocence and simplicity of manners appear to have warmly interested him. During my illness, on Mr. Howard Fanny naturally relied for support, as she had no other to whom she could fly; and his tender, compassionate attention seems to have cemented a sort of attachment between them; in *her* mere gratitude alone, and in *him* the kindness of a guardian—a *penchant* which from that gentleman's time of life and prudence can never be supposed to disturb the tranquillity of either party, but
which

which probably adds some strength to his kind activity in our affairs.

As to money matters, about which in your last you are so kindly anxious, I really understand very little of them; but Mr. Benfeley, who has ever had the management of all pecuniary business hitherto, undertakes to continue the charge. There is, I believe, the sum of twenty thousand pounds in the English funds, and above two hundred pistoles were found in my father's cabinet for present use. Debts there are none, beyond what a few Louis will discharge; so that you see we are secured in affluence, and independence is my utmost wish.

You ask me, Sophia, how Fanny, who was a pretty girl of thirteen when you last saw her, has turned out in point of beauty? When she used to visit us in the convent she was a sweet looking child in a stay coat, and I believe you have not since seen her: she is now quite formed;
and

and though not much grown, for she is not tall, is extremely improved both in face and form. Her little clumsy figure has shot up, and she retains only an agreeable degree of *en bon point*, which it would not perhaps be an advantage for her to lose even for a finer shape. Her complexion is her principal charm, and that is much refined since you saw her, for her features are more pleasing than regular. I remember you used to admire her blue eyes, and chestnut hair; but if any thing in her face deserves the pre-eminence, it is her teeth, which are exceedingly beautiful; and she still preserves that expression of sweetness and timidity which renders her appearance feminine and interesting.

She was extremely admired during our last visit at the chateau, and was not a little gratified with the notice she excited from several young men of fashion; the first time in her life that she had ever
been |

been the object of the attentions of the other sex. After our return home, I could not help remarking that she complained of our seclusion with a vexation which was not however of above one day's continuance, but which had been prompted entirely by the young Chevalier de Merville's conversation, who had represented it to her as the height of cruelty and injustice in my father, and little better than being buried alive.

Perhaps I myself, misled by vanity excited in a similar manner by the flattery of our Parisian beaux, suffered a momentary regret for being deprived of so many gay amusements, the attractions of which were painted in glowing colours by all who had enjoyed them. Alas! my heart is now thoroughly sensible of the folly of its wishes. In the season of affliction our eyes are opened to the vanity of such fallacious ideas. What would I now give to be placed in the
very

very situation which in those moments I regretted. Blessed with my father's society, to no other would I aspire; and delighted would I look forward to the prospect of spending my future days for ever at B——. How wisely then did our dear parent judge in detaining us so constantly with him. Our minds, I now perceive, were unequal to the temptation of mixing with the world untainted by a desire for its follies, and never should we have felt a regret, transient as it was, on returning to a home enlivened with his presence, had not his indulgence allowed us to join the gay party at the chateau.

I feel my strength so greatly amended, that I think of removing to Madame de Clarence's in a few days. It is but two leagues distant: and severe as leaving B—— must prove, that event is ever before my eyes; and since I am now able for it, the sooner it is over the better.

ter. Mr. Howard will remain some time behind us; having kindly undertaken to settle every thing previous to our journey, in which he is himself to accompany us. How fortunate it is for us that he returns at this juncture to England, and what a blessing from Providence was this worthy friend's visit to B——. What else could two unprotected girls have done, totally unacquainted with such transactions, ignorant of the world, and unused even in trifles to act for themselves. We must have been entirely dependant in this case upon Madam de Clarence; who, though extremely kind, might have regarded the charge as rather too great a burthen for us to impose.

OCT. 18.

We yesterday bad adieu to our old dwelling.

dwelling. How severely did I feel the pang of leaving it; and Fanny wept most bitterly at parting with our old domestics. Therese and Dubois have requested leave to attend us to England; and we must endeavour to requite their faithful attachment, which has prevailed with them to leave their own country. When the carriage drove down the avenue, I was almost suffocated with a variety of different sensations: the idea of our recent loss was so connected with every thing I left behind, that I felt as if the parting from my father had not till then completely taken place. A number of gloomy reflections assailed me likewise of another nature: we were embarking upon a dangerous and uncertain undertaking; we were going to venture on new scenes, new friends, and to a new country; where we were ignorant of the fate that might await us, and dreaded the reception we might receive.

Late

Late as is the season for travelling, we shall spend a fortnight with Madame de Clarence, who gave us the warmest reception, and as she perceived I was weak, depressed, and unfit for company, kindly insisted that I should take immediate possession of the apartment allotted me, where I indulged alone in many mournful reflections most part of the day; for I would not allow poor Fanny to attend me while there was a gay party below, though the dear girl left the saloon every quarter of an hour to enquire for me; equally divided between her anxiety on my account and the pleasing novelty of every thing that surrounded her.

On her part, the sad solemnity of quitting B—— had made her cry most of the way hither; but the chearful air that reigns here, and the kindness which her youthful manners and appearance excited from all the company, have chased

chased away the vapours that hung over her.

Having no excuse to absent myself longer, I joined the company this day at breakfast, and was introduced by Madame de Clarence to her friends. These consist of an English lady, who has taken up her residence for some months past in the town of V——, a very lively agreeable little woman of about thirty two; and the Chevalier de Mertane and his brother, two young men of splendid fortunes, nearly related to Monsieur de Clarence.

OCT. 19.

Mrs. Weldon, the English lady, possesses a flow of spirits, which, were mine able to keep pace with hers, would amuse me extremely. She appears to have taken a strong partiality for Fanny, and

and told her to-day what a world of conquests such a figure as hers must gain in London. Fanny, on her part, was, as you may believe, willing enough to give credit to the flattering compliments, and almost immediately after asked me in a whisper if I did not think Mrs. Weldon the most agreeable woman in the world. I only answered by a smile, which Fanny perfectly understood, for she coloured while she laughed it off.

Mrs. Weldon afterwards attacked her on the gravity of my appearance. She seems never to have known what grief or depression means. She did me the honour to say that she admired me extremely; but your sister, said she, totally wants the desire of being thought handsome, which ever improves and often alone constitutes beauty in the eyes of the men. I was more gratified however with the defect she had remarked than with the approbation she expressed, however

ever injudicious the remark might be, for a certain degree of vanity in pleasing is I believe natural to all of us. As for the Chevalier, he is about twenty-five, and rather good-looking, but finical in the most absurd degree, and so attentive, that his politeness fatigues instead of ingratiates. If you but look round, he enquires with earnestness if there is any thing in which he can have the honour of serving you; if you move, he flies to execute your commands; at table, he teazes you with perpetual civilities, and stays at home with the ladies the whole morning to assist in holding their thread while they work, or to present his pair of scissors when required; in short he partakes so much of the female, that I cannot help wishing to see him dressed in petticoats.

He appears to have centered his whole ideas of happiness in the vanity of making himself agreeable to our sex:
a passion,

a passion, which I am afraid the poor Chevalier can hardly ever find gratified, as his plan of pleasing is unfortunately founded on tormenting every one by unceasing assiduities. He absolutely stuns and overpowers one with compliments so outrè and absurd, that one is at a loss whether to laugh or be offended. Unluckily he appears to have singled me out for the object of his present importunities; and although I avoid him as much as is in my power, without being guilty of absolute rudeness, and almost never address my conversation to him, he contrives to engage my constant attention, and makes me such ridiculous speeches as attract the notice and often the mirth of the company, and put me extremely out of countenance. However, Madame de Clarence always talks of him, and behaves to him with particular regard: a respect which I should imagine is alone paid to his rank and immense possessions.

possessions. Mrs. Weldon sometimes cannot entirely conceal a little chagrin, at finding I engage an attention which, before my arrival she herself wholly engrossed. Yet it is impossible for any mortal to think the Chavalier agreeable: but those women who are guided by a spirit for coquetry, possess, I have been told, an appetite for praise, which devours applause and admiration without distinction, wherever it can be procured; and, if I do not judge hardly, I should suspect this to be in some measure the case with our lively English acquaintance, whose gaiety is not perfectly untinged with a degree of levity which strikes me as rather bordering on impropriety: but I am myself so ignorant of the freedom that custom authorises widows of a certain age to take, that I ought not to decide so unfavourably upon her behaviour, especially on so short an acquaintance.

Yesterday



OCT. 28.

Yesterday produced an event that has proved extremely disagreeable. A party in the morning was proposed, to ramble through the woods, which have not yet lost their beauty; it consisted of the Chevalier, Fanny, myself, and Mrs. Weldon; who, piqued at the Chevalier's neglect, (if such a phrase was ever before used by a Lady to the obsequious Chevalier), revenged herself by lavishing all her attentions on his brother, a weak but unassuming youth of twenty, who also attended us.

We soon reached a narrow path in the wood; which allowing only of two walking abreast, the Chevalier, who never quitted my side, and has been for some days past more insupportable than ever, contrived to detain me a little behind

hind the rest under pretence of pointing out to me an opening through the trees, which conveys a most delightful prospect: he then suddenly, in a low voice, besought me to listen to the most ardent, most tormenting, and most sincere passion which had ever agitated the human breast; and launched out before I could enough recover my surprize to answer him, into such a strain of far-fetched expressions of torture, hope, anguish and despair, eternal misery and unspeakable transport, that had not the suddenness of this unexpected proposal confounded and embarrassed me, I should undoubtedly have had a difficulty in refraining from laughing in his face. Not well knowing what to reply, and not instantly recollecting myself sufficiently to remember that silence may in some cases be construed into approbation, I was redoubling my pace to

join the company, when he seized my hand to detain me, and kissed it with a violence that excited a disgust so forcible, as enabled me to find instantly the use of my speech, and on his repeating these words—"There can be only one objection, my adorable Mademoiselle; but I hope you are not obstinate in the errors of your persuasion?"

I made haste to assure him there were innumerable obstacles, independant of the insuperable one at which he hinted; and that as they were all equally unsurmountable, I entreated he would mention the subject no more.

Such a profusion of protestations, accompanied with confused and hasty common-place arguments in favour of the Catholick Church, followed, that I almost ran, in my eagerness to get rid of him, and taking hold of Mrs. Weldon's arm, he was constrained to be silent; the only time he has been so one quarter

quarter of an hour together ever since our arrival here.

Mrs. Weldon observing his unusual taciturnity, rallied him on it without mercy; and asking him if I had been inexorable during our *tete-à-tete*, laughed so violently at his mortified countenance and hesitating answers, that the poor Chevalier even blushed; as for me, I was so extremely indifferent, that this subject, too delicate for a hint had another object been concerned, hardly embarrassed me; but Mrs. Weldon, perceiving that her teasing had all the effect she could wish, did not spare the Chevalier during the whole day.

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OCT. 30.

This morning Madam de Clarence, during breakfast, whispered me that she wished to talk with me alone; and as

soon as it was over led me to her dressing room, where she informed me, that the Chevalier de Mertane had applied to her on the subject of his passion.

I have observed with pleasure, said she, his growing attachment ever since your first arrival, and have inclined to give the Chevalier all opportunities of manifesting it to you, from the hope that an union so desirable and in every respect so honourable, may fix my dearest Hermione for ever in the country which has been so long her residence, and which she ought to consider as her own: how then was I hurt and disappointed, when he last night informed me of the success his first declaration had met with. But I know your objection my dear, continued she, perceiving I was going to interrupt her; but that objection is not insuperable, and indeed is my principal motive for promoting this alliance. I can easily  
enter



enter into your feelings, prejudiced as you must be in favour of the persuasion in which you have been educated, nor will I suppose for a moment that any advantages of worldly prosperity could induce you to hazard, on this account alone, a perversion of principles; all I hope from this proposal of the Chevalier's is, that you will allow some of the worthy and learned fathers of the church to converse with you on the subject of religion, that you will hear their arguments in favour of the great truths of the Catholick faith, which carry instant conviction as soon as they are brought into light, and which in a mind so young, so candid, and unbiaſſed as yours, cannot fail of subduing all your scruples, and determining you to place implicit trust in them.

After expressing my gratitude to Madame de Clarence for the kind importunity and warmth with which she interested herself in my spiritual as well as

temporal welfare, I assured her, in the most determined manner, that I was firmly and unalterably resolved to adhere to the Protestant religion. It was a religion, I said, which admitted to my mind neither doubt nor scruples: it had been my support in affliction, and was the anchor to which I leant for trust in every succeeding event of my life; and I added, that were this point entirely out of the question, the Chevalier's proposal, generous and disinterested as it was, would have met with the same reception.

Various were the pleas, arguments, and intreaties, used by this worthy friend to induce me to comply with her wish of admitting her confessor to converse with me on the subject; but I firmly and determinedly opposed it. This is a step Madam, said I, against which my father has particularly cautioned me, and to which I hope you will not think me  
ungrate-

ungratefully obstinate if I protest I never willingly shall submit.

Obstinate, you force me to pronounce you, cried she with some heat, and in all respects unaccountable. What reasonable aversion can you have on the other hand to the Chevalier? perhaps you think he has been too presuming in confessing his wishes so early: but consider, he finds himself just on the eve of losing you, perhaps for ever. Your intended journey has accelerated his proposals; and they are of a nature that well deserve to be considered. He is of a noble family, splendid fortune, master of himself, and tenderly attached to you. Perhaps there may be some little errors in his manner which you might wish corrected; but they are the result of good nature, and of a wish to please: perhaps too you may imagine, and with reason, that his understanding is inferior to your own; but when you have

lived as long in the world and beheld as much of mankind as I have done, you will find this disadvantage greatly overbalanced by many other circumstances in favour of this alliance—circumstances on which I have as yet but lightly touched.

I answered Madame de Clarence with all the warmth of gratitude which the kind interest she takes in my concerns so well merits, but sincerely avowed that the Chevalier's *little errors* were such as blinded me to the advantages she had pointed out, and intreated that she would mention a subject no more, which very fortunately proved in all respects disagreeable to me; since the impediment of religion alone was a bar perfectly unfurmountable, even had I wished the union to take place.

Perhaps I spoke with a little too much heat; but my impatience had no effect on my amiable friend, who treated  
all



all my arguments as the effusions of bigotry on the one hand, and of romance imbibed in retirement on the other. Finding all she said ineffectual, she distressed me extremely by calling in her husband to her assistance, who joined, out of mere good breeding, to torment me, by representing this odious match as splendid and desirable in the highest degree. What! cried Madame de Clarence, to settle for life in England? a foreign—at least an unknown country; where you confess you have but distant relations to receive you, and no certainty of finding friends; and to leave France, where an establishment so brilliant awaits you, and where you have it in your power to engage for yourself and your sister an honourable protector in the married state?

At this last phrase, though extremely harraßed by their expostulations and hurt at appearing so absurdly refined, I

could not help laughing heartily; in which both Monsieur and his lady joined me, in spite of their utmost efforts to preserve their gravity. This convinced me, that their opinion of their relation, in spite of their warmth, was pretty much on a footing with my own: indeed, the thoughts of the Chevalier and protection, were two ideas which could not possibly be associated without exciting an inclination to smile, for his appearance is beyond measure effeminate and insignificant.

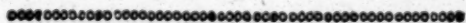
Seeing me quite immovable in my determination, they at last gave over their importunities; which proceeding from disinterested friendship, at once gratified and oppressed me.

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NOV. I.

Mr. Howard, who is well acquainted
with

with the family here, paid us this day a visit from B——. Fanny and I rejoiced to see him. He tells us that he has entirely finished all the business which has hitherto detained him there, and adds, that if we have no particular design of protracting our stay, he thinks we ought no longer to delay setting off, as the season is far advanced, and most of our baggage is already on its way. We agreed with him as to the necessity of our immediate departure; and in spite of our worthy friends entreaties, have fixed on the 5th, when we shall bid adieu to the hospitable chateau.



NOV. 2.

Yesterday Madame de Clarence, who is steady in her opinion that my everlasting good is intimately connected with my change of principles, and regards it

as

as a duty indispensable to leave no means untried to convert me, intreated me to allow her confessor, a venerable old man, who dined with us, and who I suppose had been invited for the purpose, to converse with me in private on the subject of religion, but I excused myself, though not without difficulty; and as there was a large company of visitors, by attaching myself to several ladies and gentlemen, the poor priest could not find me one instant disengaged the whole day.



NOV. 3.

The poor Chevalier!—I really think, I ought to be sorry for him. My continued coldness, and visible endeavours to avoid him, have at length had the desired effect: he even no longer teizes me with intreaties; but finding that those
with

with which for a day or two he incessantly tormented me have gained nothing but encreased reserve and constant disregard, he is now labouring to try if offended pride or pique will be of service to his cause; and lavishes all his attentions on Mrs. Weldon, who on her part receives them with an air of exultation and triumph but ill concealed.

I fancy he hardly expected a refusal so mortifying from an inconsiderate country girl, whose alliance could neither reflect lustre nor importance on his family; and really, according to the prevailing opinions of this quarter of the world, I cannot but admire the disinterestedness of the Chevalier's proposal, however disagreeable it has proved in other respects: for a marriage made without eclat, high connections, and splendor, I find, by Madame de Clarence, is regarded by the enlightened part of the world as a weakness and folly,

folly, which subject those who are influenced to adopt them to much ridicule and reproach: and those, you may believe, who from an absurd refinement reject such fortunate contingencies when they present themselves, are laid open to censure ten times keener and more poignant.

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

NOV. 4.

The behaviour of the lively widow really confounds me. I, who am new to the world, and unacquainted with its customs, can no way reconcile myself to that levity which her behaviour, tho' sprightly and pleasing, so strongly indicates: yet there is something so insinuating in her address, that one loves and blames her in the same moment.

Mr. Howard has written me a line to-day, intimating that he will be here
to-morrow

to-morrow evening, and on the morning after we are to depart. He has received, he tells me, another letter from Mr. Benfeley, expressing the utmost impatience for our arrival.

Adieu! my beloved friend! I shall not find opportunity to continue my journal regularly till we are actually in England; do not therefore expect another packet to follow so soon as usual, though I well know your kind anxiety will induce you to be more desirous of it than ever. This long, long journey! with what a weight does its oppress me! Would it were a joyful undertaking, or an event that promised comfort or pleasure; but our prospects are at best unsatisfactory, and their issue wrapt in dark obscurity. Farewell my dear Sophia.

H. SEYMOUR.



LETTER IV.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

DOVER, NOV. 29, —.

WE have accomplished our journey so far, though not without having experienced the perils and alarms incident to travellers. The weather, till our arrival at Calais, was delightful for the season, and our journey on the whole infinitely more agreeable, from the beauty and variety of the scenes which so rapidly shifted before our eyes, than I could possibly have expected. You may believe, my love, it was not without a bitter pang that we bad adieu to Languedoc, and quitted, probably for ever, the abode
of

of our early days; poor Madame de Clarence too mingled her tears with ours at parting, and charged us to remember her as a friend who should ever prove warmly and deeply interested in our happiness.

When we arrived at Calais, Fanny having been affected with a slight cold, attended by a fore throat, Mr. Howard insisted on our remaining a day or two there, before we ventured on the water; and when we were ready to depart, we found no little difficulty in procuring a vessel, as, owing to adverse winds, they were all detained on the opposite shore, one excepted, which with some trouble Mr. Howard at length procured. Soon after, as we were preparing to get on board, our landlord entered, and informed us that a gentleman was that moment arrived, who had travelled from Paris with the utmost expedition, and was in extreme haste to get over to England,

land, where business of real moment required his presence, but that the circumstance before mentioned must unavoidably detain him at Calais, unless we thought proper to offer him a conveyance in our vessel.

On this information Mr. Howard desired the landlord to present his best respects to the gentleman, and to acquaint him that we were about to depart immediately, and that if it was agreeable to him to accompany us, we should be extremely happy to accommodate him and his attendants. The gentleman was then introduced by our host, and expressed his thanks to us in the most polite manner, and without further delay we all went on board.

We had scarce quitted Calais, when it began to blow with tremendous violence, and from a quarter that equally opposed our getting to Dover or regaining the harbour we had just quitted,
which

which the seamen anxiously, tho' without success, laboured to effect. Mr. Howard and our fellow traveller exerted themselves to mitigate our apprehensions; assuring us, that as the vessel was in good condition, and had many able hands on board, our fears greatly magnified the danger. A new alarm however soon after occurred which rendered our situation seriously critical: some part of the apparatus of the pump was found defective; and a leak having been discovered, the water began to make way very rapidly. Upon this information, the countenances of our comforters betrayed a sudden though but a momentary anxiety that wholly bereaved us of that support which their apparent ease and indifference had hitherto in some measure afforded us. Fanny, almost distracted, threw herself into the arms of Mr. Howard, as if for protection, and I, whose dismay, though not less severe was less audible, sat silently

lently offering up my prayers to heaven with a resolute composure, the mere effects of hopeless despair, every moment expecting to be swallowed up in one of the frightful waves which were rising like mountains on all sides.

Mr. Howard being occupied in vainly endeavouring to moderate Fanny's terrors, and our stranger companion gone to examine into the nature of our alarm, I was in a manner left to my own reflections: and at length throwing my arms about my poor Fanny, who reclined her head almost lifeless upon Mr. Howard's shoulder—We are but going to rejoin our dear father, my love, cried I, nor is there any thing so very frightful in the idea. The Almighty might have been infinitely less merciful in his dispensations. We shall expire together, and at the same instant: one miserable survivor will not be preserved to mourn in a foreign country her irreparable loss; where
not

not a pitying friend might be found to console her under the severity of affliction.

Affected by these words, our fellow traveller, whose return I had not perceived, besought me in the most respectful manner to allow him the honour of assisting me; and throwing his arm round me, supported me as I sat, as far as was in his power, from the disagreeable effects of the incessant rolling of the vessel. Stupified by fear, I attended only to my dear Fanny, who had turned and locked herself in my embraces, and whom I laboured by various arguments to inspire with that fortitude and resignation which religion can alone dispense in a moment so replete with horror. No moment could indeed prove more dreadful. The oaths and execrations of one half of the seamen, whose profanity seemed too habitual to desert them even on this awful occasion; the utter despondency of the other,

other, and the dismay of all our attendants, produced on the whole a scene of terror and confusion, on which I cannot reflect without horror inexpressible.

Mr. Howard and our fellow traveller were the only persons on board who at this critical juncture preserved their usual composure. The danger, however extreme and immediate, could neither distract their attentions nor wholly absorb their cares; while the former employed himself unceasingly to support the exhausted spirits of my sister, the latter seemed to consider me as his peculiar charge; and his conversation, at once soothing, spirited, and insinuating, insensibly fortified my courage, and strengthened my mind.

Gratified by the generous exertions made to sustain my drooping fortitude, I at length turned round to regard the person to whom I considered myself as so particularly indebted, and was not a little astonished to perceive, in the department

ment of this unknown young man, a striking and peculiar elegance, and in his countenance an interesting intelligence, which I was amazed I had not before more particularly distinguished.

The serenity of his aspect at that formidable instant struck me so forcibly, that I involuntarily exclaimed—oh with what superior resolution must God Almighty have endowed *men*, if you, Sir, are really as unconcerned as you appear at this tremendous moment.

I believe this sally made him smile. Madam, said he, I have ever been of opinion that in natural courage the ladies are infinitely our superiors. It must be owned, perhaps, that men are not quite so ingenious in apprehending or in foreseeing evil at a distance; but when it actually arrives, we seldom support its bitterness with more genuine greatness of mind than the gentler sex often testify in the most arduous and painful circumstances.

stances. The composure and resolution, added he, which I have just been contemplating has but confirmed this idea, and augmented my admiration of female fortitude.

As he pronounced these words, the sailors gave a loud huzza on having at length effected the re-adjustment of the pump. Fanny, unused to such rude demonstrations of joy, imagined all was over, and that we were instantly going to the bottom; but Mr. Howard and our companion soon relieved her fears, by congratulating us on the safety which this transaction indicated, and as the storm now began to abate considerably, our apprehensions were less distressing. Still however it blew from an unfavourable point, and the master told us he had no hopes of gaining Dover till next morning; but the security of which he assured us made us consider that delay as of little moment; and with revived
spirits

spirits my sister and I entered into conversation with Mr. Howard and our agreeable new acquaintance, to whose compassionate support I owed in a great measure the composure for which he so eagerly applauded me.

I now had leisure to observe him, and found, that prepossessing as had been his figure on a cursory view, it lost nothing of my admiration from being more minutely considered. He seemed about twenty four, and I think I never beheld a countenance that possessed so large a portion of that expression, to which, from inability otherwise to define it, is usually given the appellation of *je ne sçai quoi*.

Mr. Howard was delighted with his conversation, which seemed the result of a mind cultivated and enlightened, joined to an extensive knowledge of the world. The circumstances of our situation entirely discarded the formalities of a recent introduction, and seemed to pave

the way for intimacy. We conversed as old friends, who had been unexpectedly preserved by the mercy of Providence: nor did it, I believe, once occur to any of the party, till we had actually landed on shore, that this agreeable stranger was but the acquaintance of a night, and that we were even ignorant of his name.

Mr. Howard invited him to breakfast with us at the inn, where we did not arrive till eleven in the morning; and he accepted it with evident marks of pleasure. A slight refreshment was then brought in: of which, exhausted and fatigued as we were, my sister and I were unable to partake, and we all soon after retired to rest, which was, you may conjecture, extremely requisite. A few hours however sufficed to refresh us; and awaking about six in the evening, we immediately arose, and on entering the parlour found the gentlemen impatiently expecting us to dinner.

After

After many obliging enquiries, and hoping that we had not suffered from our fears and fatigues—I have been acknowledging to Mr. Howard, said our fellow traveller, both a failure in gallantry and a degree of selfishness which may in all probability subject me to the mortification of your censure; but it must be owned, notwithstanding the danger you two ladies were exposed to and the severe apprehensions you underwent, for which I think none could feel more poignantly than I myself did, that it will never be in my power to reflect on that night without experiencing the most lively emotions of pleasure at the recollection; since it has procured me the honour of an acquaintance which I shall ever regard as one of the most fortunate events of my life.

To this compliment, too flattering for a reply, we could only answer by an inclination of our heads. Whether we

all prized our existence the more for having been so lately on the point of losing it I know not, but our recent danger certainly bestowed an additional relish on our present security, and gave such a lightness to our hearts, as put all ceremony and constraint at defiance. My mind had not, ever since our irreparable loss, felt so unburthened either from painful recollections or anticipated evils as it then did, and in blessing heaven for our safety I did not fail to lift up my soul in thankfulness that I was enabled to enjoy it from a flow of spirits which have been long a stranger to my bosom.

Our agreeable companion partook of our gaiety; and joined in the conversation with a polite vivacity which animated and supported it. Ah! thought I, more than once during the evening, were all the English as amiable and accomplished as this specimen seems to indicate,

indicate, little should I regret that fate has condemned me to reside among them.

You may believe, Sophia, we were all not a little desirous of knowing the name of a person whose address and appearance had prepossessed us so strongly in his favour, and with whom we had been conversing for hours on a footing of intimacy. He had greatly the advantage of us in this particular, had his curiosity been equally excited; for hearing Mr. Howard, my sister, and myself, mutually name each other, he was enabled to give us our proper appellations of distinction, while all we could discover in regard to him was, what occasionally dropt from him in the course of conversation, and that went no further than to inform us that he had been several years abroad, which time he had spent in residing at the different courts of Europe, where he appeared intimately acquainted with several characters of emi-

nence not wholly unknown to Mr. Howard.

When Fanny and I got up to retire for the night, he approached to take leave of us, saying that family affairs required him to hasten his departure; but the happiness of your company, said he, has made me steal a few hours from my journey: but may I be allowed to flatter myself that you will permit me the favour of enquiring after your healths in town, where I hope to be in a short time. I confess the boldness of this request may justly induce you to accuse me of temerity: but after the good fortune fate has conferred in this introduction, I cannot prevail with myself to relinquish the unlooked for benefit that has been thrown in my way. May I then flatter myself you will favour me so far? We assured him we should be extremely happy to see him; and referred him to Mr. Howard for the knowledge
of

of our abode, which is unknown to ourselves. We are strangers and foreigners in England, said I, and shall certainly be much pleased to meet again with our first English acquaintance. We then wished him an agreeable journey, and left the room.

When we had retired, this unknown expressed in warm terms to Mr. Howard his wishes for improving this accidental acquaintance, made many polite offers of service, and discovered his name at parting by presenting him with a card, on which was written the following address—the Honourable Charles Roatsley, St. James's Square. He then set off in a carriage and four at half past two in the morning.

Mr. Howard has persuaded us to remain all this day at Dover, and perhaps tomorrow, in order to recruit our spirits after our fatigue, and I have acquiesced because my sister is rather indisposed; but the

day after we shall certainly pursue our journey. Adieu.

H. SEYMOUR.

LETTER V.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

LONDON, DEC. 2, —.

OH! my Sophia, how unfortunate have we been! Our friend, good Mr. Bensley is no more! he expired only two days ago of the gout, which had attacked his stomach, and here are we in London, this immense overgrown city, without one single human being, Mr. Howard excepted, who has the most distant interest in us, or probably knows of our existence.

Oh!

Oh! what a burthen must we prove to that worthy man's mind, and how little claim, except from his friendship to my father, have we to give him so much trouble.

This unfortunate and unforeseen calamity has overwhelmed us with affliction. It has broken all our measures, and interrupted all our plans. We feel as in a desert. This is indeed *solitude*, to be without friends and without protection, except what we receive from the kindness of compassion.

Mr. Howard this morning (for we got hither last night, but unwilling to disturb Mr. Bensley's sober family at so late an hour, procured very good lodgings in a neighbouring street) went himself to inform our worthy guardian of the arrival of his guests. You may easily conclude how much shocked he was on being informed by the footman who attended at the door that Mr. Bensley had expired

on Monday last: he returned instantly in great perturbation to inform us of this dismal intelligence.

This is an accident extremely unfortunate, said he, as Mr. Bensley was undoubtedly the properest person to mediate between you and your grand father; but I hope natural affection will plead for his son's offspring so powerfully as to induce him immediately to take you under his own protection, in which case no material inconvenience will accrue from the loss.

Oh! in what unavoidable difficulties did your friendly kindness involve you, my dear Sir, cried I, when you undertook so troublesome a charge as we must prove.

Talk not to me in this style, my dear Miss Seymour, cried he, interrupting me—the trifling assistance I had it in my power to offer you towards regulating your affairs at B—, was without a compliment

pliment so greatly recompensed by the opportunity with which I was favoured of manifesting, however feebly, my friendship for your father, that it pains me to think you should imagine any thanks due to an occurrence which employed agreeably a little idle time that must otherwise have lain heavy and languid on my hands: as to the honour you did me in allowing me to attend you hither, it was a favour as well as a gratification for which my thanks instead of yours are due.

I believe that had Mr. Bensley's death taken place previous to your father's, he would have nominated me your guardian: as this event has followed, I owe it in duty to my deceased friend, as well as from my esteem for you, to take on me the care of your affairs; and as the first proof of your obedience, I exact an eternal silence on the subject, either of apology or gratitude. Let us consider
then,

then, continued he in the same breath, to prevent our again interrupting him with apologies, what steps we ought next to pursue. I am of opinion that an application to Lord Belmont cannot too soon be made; and if I have your permission, shall undertake to write to him this very day.

We instantly closed with the proposal, and he directly left us to set about the task; in the success of which he seems as anxious, and as deeply interested, as if we were his most intimate connections and our lives depended 'on the issue. The happiness of our lives at least certainly hang on the event. Oh! my Sophia, think of our critical situation, and feel for the agitation of my mind at this moment. A few hours will decide all—will determine whether we are outcasts from our family, deserted and friendless, or received with tender emotion to the bosom of a parent, to whom, though
unknown,

unknown, my heart glows with the warmest affection and most filial respect. My soul, melted by an eternal separation from one yet more dearly beloved, dissolves with the soft ideas which rush upon my mind. Imagination, never more busy than in the moments of agitation, perpetually represents some future scene of affecting delight, and while I weep the bitter loss of one father, I see myself every moment encircled in the arms of another—whom heaven yet preserves.

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DEC. 3.

Fanny, whose heart is always full of soothing hopes, strives to recompence the disappointment we have suffered in the death of Mr. Bensley, by anticipating happiness under the protection of Lord Belmont; but the painful uncertainty of what may be his Lordship's determination,

determination, is, alas ! rendered more acute by delay. Mr. Howard went out yesterday immediately after dinner, intending himself to deliver the letter he had written.

The servant who opened the door, on being asked if his Lordship was at home, returned for answer that he was not expected till spring.

Is then my Lord in the country ? said Mr. Howard.

No, Sir, he is still at Nice.

Mr. Howard was much disappointed at this information ; and as he held the letter in his hand with a look of chagrin, the footman told him, that if he was anxious to have it sent safe he might leave it with his Lordship's steward, who lodged at present in the house, and who would take care to dispatch it with a proper direction. As he spoke these words, the steward himself passed the door ; and hearing his name pronounced, civilly

civilly advanced to know if Mr. Howard had any commands for Lord Belmont in which he could assist him, and asked him to walk into the parlour.

Mr. Howard seized this opportunity for making some further enquiries; and was informed, that my Lord being thought in a declining state of health, had been ordered by his physicians abroad; that he had been absent almost a twelvemonth, attended by his grand-son, the present Lord Linrose, who was likewise advised to try a warmer climate for the recovery of a cough, which was apprehended to be consumptive. The death of his father, the late Lord, the steward added, had induced the family to expect the immediate return both of Lord Linrose and his grand-father; but the last dispatches had entirely contradicted this idea, intimating that Lord Belmont had received such essential benefit from the salutary air of Nice, that he had determined

mined to continue there till his disorder was wholly removed; and that Lord Linrose dared not venture as yet braving a chilly winter in England.

Mr. Howard then returned to us, not a little hurt at the intelligence he was constrained to communicate. Oh, Sophia, how unfortunate! Had we been made sooner acquainted with these particulars, we might have remained in our peaceful retreat at B——, where, happy in the protection and friendship of Madame de Clarence, we must have enjoyed comfort and contentment; but poor Mr. Benskeley's death is an evil we dreaded not; and bequeathed to his care, we were left no choice as to our residence.

Nothing can prove more delicate, more embarrassing, than our present situation. I am but ill versed, I own, in the customs which in this part of the world propriety prescribes; yet surely Mr. Howard, neither from age nor appearance,

pearance, can be deemed a proper protector, under the assumed appellation of guardian, for two young girls unfriended and unknown, particularly when he is himself conscious that he possesses not even that nominal title to remain constantly under the same roof with us. It must subject us to observation, and probably may even provoke censure; yet so tender is the point, that I should blush but to hint it to him.

[DEC. 4.]

Mr. Howard, after appearing very thoughtful most part of yesterday evening, made an apology for absenting himself for an hour or two, and left us.

We had indeed been extreme bad company. Fanny was funk and disappointed. What a reverse from the gay chimeras that had taken possession of her mind.

mind. Languid and dispirited, she had reclined, half asleep, upon a chair, leaving me to support a conversation with Mr. Howard which evidently interested neither party; but ashamed of the burthen we are reduced to impose on that amiable man, and which (though from friendly anxiety alone) appeared to hang very heavily on his mind, I vainly exerted myself to appear in spirits in order to lighten his visible uneasiness, and affected to be unconscious that our situation was either so awkward or so uncomfortable as it in fact appeared to me.

The moment he was gone, however, my half suffocating emotions got vent; and suddenly giving way to the anguish that oppressed me, I threw my arms about my dearest Fanny's neck, and burst into a flood of tears, which flowed with profusion, from a variety of painful feelings.

Accustomed to the tender attentions
of

of paternal care, softened by the caresses and indulgence of paternal fondness, my heart felt—bitterly felt! the painful void of possessing none to whom I owed affection and duty—none from whom I could claim tenderness and regard.

Oh! my dearest Fanny! cried I, were we this instant to expire, who would shed one tear over us? My Sophia indeed, my kind, my affectionate Sophia, still remains to me; and possessed of such a friend, I ought not to repine: but who, in all this populous and extended country, (Mr. Howard excepted) were we to lay down our heads and die before another day returned, would pay us even a tribute of passing regret. Every one else is blest with some tender relation who calls forth and returns the soothing sensations of interest and attachment, but we are unknown, unloved, and unconnected on the earth!

Having vented the first effusions of
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my feelings, I grew more composed; and reproaching myself for this weak indulgence, which had severely affected my poor Fanny, who, naturally sanguine, was not disposed for such deep depression had I not set her an example of dejection, I dried my eyes and endeavoured all in my power to sooth and console her; but the task was not so easy as I had imagined. Grief and fear are often infectious; and I had pointed out the melancholy independence of our situation in terms so alarming as had intimidated and alarmed her. In attempting to give her comfort however I profitted by my own arguments, and began to perceive that we had not in fact that reason for despondency which the solitude of our situation had at first suggested. Letters would not be long in reaching Nice, and a short suspense would one way or other soon compose all our agitations.

These reflections produced a tolerable
degree

degree of composure by the time Mr. Howard returned. I have been visiting my brother's family, said he, which I have not had an opportunity of doing till this evening, and have brought a message from his lady, requesting that you both would favour her with your company to-morrow to dinner. She intends to have the pleasure of waiting on you in the morning, and hopes to procure you some little amusement by attending you to whatever appears curious to strangers in this metropolis.

We gratefully accepted the proposal. He afterwards told us that he had been paying another visit to Lord Belmont's steward. He tells me, said he, that Lady Linrose is still at her seat in Northamptonshire, where she has resided constantly since her Lord's death, and I mean, should you approve of it, by only making a few alterations, to address the letter

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ter to her Ladyship which was intended for my Lord.

Mean time, continued he, my sister in law will be delighted to have the favour of your company, not as occasional visitors only, but as inmates of her family. She entreated me with much earnestness to make this proposal to you; but I told her, although I felt a guardian's interest, I could not absolutely claim a guardian's authority, and must leave her to prevail with my charming wards by her own intercession when she is introduced to their acquaintance; I hope however you will find Mrs. Hindon's house so agreeable as may induce you to oblige her by making it your abode till you are otherwise settled to your satisfaction.

With how much delicacy was this proposal made. The compliment of such an offer from an utter stranger could not but have been suggested from Mr. Howard's

ard's having represented in strong colours our helpless and unconnected situation. The idea hurts and mortifies me; yet we cannot but feel gratified by Mr. Howard's endeavours to persuade us to regard this civility as a favour conferred upon his sister instead of being received from her hands.

While we remain in this uncertainty, in order to guard against curiosity, I have requested Mr. Howard to conceal our real situation and connections except from his brother's family, to whom he promises to enjoin secrecy.

Mr. Howard's letter to Lady Linrose, briefly stating our situation and requesting her mediation with Lord Belmont, was sent off by this day's post. He tells her Ladyship that we are at present in London, where the accident of Mr. Bensley's death leaves us (in our grand father's absence) entirely dependant on her Ladyship, whose countenance we venture

ture to entreat, since we are unconscious of having in any way forfeited our right to the protection of our family; and whose good offices our friendless state leads us to solicit, as well from her benevolence and humanity as from the ties of consanguinity which subsist between us. It is directed to Northamptonshire, and we anxiously wait her Ladyship's reply.

Mrs. Hindon was so kind as to breakfast with us this morning, accompanied by her husband. She is a little plump woman, between thirty and forty, whose countenance is by no means plain, but whose address is far from possessing either polish or grace. What her manners wanted in elegance was however fully made up by kindness and attention. She overwhelmed both Fanny and me with expressions of civility and offers of friendship, and told us that she insisted on our becoming her guests, and making her
house

house our own as long as we should find it agreeable. She regretted extremely, she said, that a country cousin, who however would be otherwise disposed of in a few days, at present occupied the apartment, which afterwards would be heartily and entirely at our service : but as soon as she could get her trumpery removed, and things were put in proper order, she hoped we would favour her so far as to take immediate possession of it.

This hospitality, though rather rudely expressed, was so extremely benevolent, and so happily timed for our difficulties, that I knew not how to express in terms sufficiently fervent the gratitude it inspired.

Mrs. Hindon then carried us an airing in her coach, through several of the principal streets of the city, and appeared so kindly solicitous for our entertainment, that during our ride she was continually planning different parties of pleasure, or

describing different places of amusement, to which she promised to accompany us; and she regretted much that the morning was too far advanced to admit of our seeing any of the sights and curiosities which she said abounded in every quarter of the town.

On returning to set us down at our lodgings, she invited us to dine at her house, and insisted on sending her carriage for us before her hour of dining.

Finding it near three o'clock, we set about dressing with the utmost expedition; but so absurdly late are the hours in this part of the world, that though it is now past four in the afternoon, the coach has not yet made its appearance, and Mr. Howard tells me people here don't think of sitting down to dinner till the evening is far advanced.

Our

DEC. 5.

Our entertainment yesterday was splendid, and the furniture of Mr. Hindon's house superb and expensive beyond what I should have expected in the abode of a man who owes his riches in a great measure to his own industry. Every thing in the family bespoke opulence. The appearance of the lady of the mansion did not however, I must acknowledge, accord with the elegance that surrounded her; but she was so extremely kind and obliging, that it is ungrateful to lay an ungenerous stress on a fault which proceeds not from the heart, and which for that reason must be unseen by her friends though striking to the eyes of a stranger

The company consisted of a Sir Jonathan Farnford, his lady, and daughter, a
M 2 young

young lady of sixteen, just come from a boarding school, Captain Wilmot, nephew to Mrs. Hindon, and a modest looking girl, whose surname I heard not, as Mr. and Mrs. Hindon always spoke to her by the familiar appellation of Jenny, and who I conjectured was the country cousin before mentioned. In this idea I was confirmed from observing the unfeeling neglect with which she was treated, not only by the lady of the house, but by all her guests (our party excepted) who seemed to have taken a hint from that lady's behaviour to regard the poor girl as an inferior.

I could not help extremely pitying her situation, which was to the last degree mortifying, particularly as her diffidence and timidity appeared rather to ask for encouragement than to provoke rebuke. She evidently felt uncomfortable and ashamed; and sat silently negligent of what was passing, as if perfectly unconcerned

unconcerned in the scene, and without once attempting to join in the conversation.

The painful dependence of this young woman struck me the more forcibly as it was contrasted with that flow of civility, warm and unbounded, which Mrs. Hindon abundantly lavished upon us, though utter strangers, and which, while it gained my innocent Fanny's heart, appeared to me so greatly beyond what an acquaintance of a few hours could either excite or authorize in a mind possessed of delicacy and refinement, that though charmed with it for the first half hour, and delighted with the flattering idea of having so early inspired a predilection so fortunate in our present circumstances, I began to consider, before the evening was over, that kindness bestowed so fervently, ere time had been given not only for investigation but even for common knowledge, must be

too indiscriminate either to prove gratifying or lasting, and seemed rather the effusions of the tongue than the overflowings of a heart warm and sincere. I confess indeed, that the visit of yesterday to Mrs. Hindon has not encreased my desire of residing in her house; yet as it is the only eligible scheme that presents itself at present, and she is eager that we should accept of her repeated invitations, we have resolved for a short time to comply.

I was extremely astonished, during this visit, to observe the remarkable difference between our manners (for still must I regard France as my own country) and those of the English. I own I have been very little conversant in any society; yet when I have been at the chateau de Clarence, and while I was permitted at your aunt's earnest entreaties to spend that happy three weeks (never to be forgotten) in all the innocent

cent gaieties of M—— with my beloved Sophy, I remember the gentlemen who occasionally visited at your house were all uniformly attentive and polite in the highest degree, and were ever so well bred as to appear gratified with our presence and pleased with our conversation, whatever their private sentiments might be ; but here, my dear, the behaviour of the men was not only indifferent and uncomplaisant, but often rude and uncivil.

Captain Wilmot, though very gayly dressed, and in a style which betrayed no great dislike to the idea of attracting the notice of the other sex, yet endeavoured by various methods to discover his perfect disregard of the ladies present, whom he did not seem to think deserving even of the common attentions usually paid them.

Mrs. Hindon, on our entering, introduced him to us ; which having produced a hasty bow, he afterwards reclined

M 4

with

with his back to the wall in a careless attitude, and then strolled about the room, occasionally joining the other gentlemen, who were chatting by themselves in a corner.

These airs had the effect (for which I make no doubt they were intended) of augmenting his importance in the eyes of Miss Farnford, who strove to attract his attention, and at last succeeded so far as to engage him in a *tête à tête* conversation, if such it could be called, partly composed of tittering and whispering, of which Fanny and I were evidently the objects. Lady Farnford and Mrs. Hindon however atoned for their incivility, by bestowing on us their whole attention. The former, with the most insatiable curiosity, endeavoured to penetrate into every circumstance relating to our situation abroad, with an avidity which could not have been excited without some previous information:

I cautioned

I cautioned Mr. Howard on the subject of secrecy, and besought him to request his brother and Mrs. Hindon not to communicate our affairs out of their own family; but I fear it has not been at all observed, for it was not difficult to perceive that we were regarded by the whole company with an eye of eager scrutiny, which denoted that we had been, according to a phrase of Mrs. Hindon's, *on the carpet* before we entered.

At table, the conversation was general: that is to say, it consisted of those common-place topics which neither greatly amuse nor deeply interest, but which in a mixed company are taken up with seeming eagerness merely *pour passer le tems*.

Mr. Hindon appears to be a good sort of bluff English character, who can allow neither of merit nor talents out of his own country, nor conceive any sort of enjoyment out of this city, which he

says he never quits even in summer, though he has a very fine villa within six miles of town. He is a banker, and possessed of a large fortune, partly the fruits of his own industry, and partly brought him by his wife; from whom, being an heiress, according to an established form here, he also receives his name.

He seems to enjoy good cheer with an extraordinary relish: dinner serving equally for the purposes of conversation and refreshment. The former, it indeed furnished abundantly; only varied by a dissertation on the different dishes. I remarked that Sir Jonathan, as well as Mr. Hindon, appeared to value themselves extremely on those qualities which more properly belonged to their cooks.

When the repast, which was sumptuous, was removed to make way for the desert, the younger part of the family, consisting of two girls under ten years old

old and a boy about six, made their appearance, and compleatly took place of the discourse on cookery. The delighted parents instantly shifting the topic to that of their children, related with eager satisfaction their various improvements, accomplishments, and dispositions, not forgetting the infantine bon mots of little Billy, whom sleep deprived us of the pleasure of beholding.

I am myself so extremely fond of children, that this conversation, had I been the only person present, might have entertained and even interested me ; but I could not help painfully feeling for its impropriety, which so evidently fatigued instead of amused the company on this occasion, that I pitied the blindness while I could not but admire the warmth of Mrs. Hindon's maternal tenderness. Sir Jonathan indeed took little pains to conceal that he was heartily tired of the subject ; but neither his repeated yawnings,

yawnings, nor constant attempts to change it, could induce the gratified parents to wander from a point which they concluded gave almost equal pleasure to their guests and themselves.

When the ladies retired to tea and coffee, Fanny and I were again subjected to the inquisitive interrogatories of Lady Farnford; which, as our situation is at present but in part revealed, extremely embarrassed me. That we had been educated abroad, and never had visited England before, I wished not to conceal; but our reasons for leaving a spot which had been so long our home, and the solitude in which we had been reared, it was unnecessary to divulge, and for many reasons I chose not to acknowledge, especially to a person whom I had not been introduced to above a couple of hours before; yet Lady Farnford contrived to penetrate into every circumstance

stance with an eagerness which convinced me all was not perfectly new to her.

You received your education in a convent, I believe ladies? said she.

Yes, Madam.

Lord, cried the daughter, were you not afraid they would have made nuns of you?

We had no great reason to be alarmed as to that point, said I, for my father took infinite care to fortify us against all their attacks.

I fancy, resumed the mother, *home* would not be much more lively than the monastery, for I believe you lived *retiredly* enough. You saw very little company I should suppose.

Finding I only answered by a simple affirmative, without growing in the least communicative, she turned to Fanny—It must have been rather dull, I should imagine, to live in a manner so solitary, so out of the world, with no society but
merely

merely that of the old gentleman your father?

Our governess, a most amiable and respectable woman, said Fanny, died only four years ago; and she was our constant companion while she lived.

But you must have been very young when you lost her?

Yes, Madam, my sister was not then fourteen and I was scarcely twelve.

You got some one, I should imagine, to supply her place?

None, Madam. My sister was soon after sent to the convent for two years, and I was left solely under my father's care till her return: for he took great pains himself in our improvement, and could not consent to deprive himself of both at one time.

It must have appeared very dismal, said Lady Farnford. To be always in the country and to see nobody, must
be

be gloomy indeed at your time of life, for you had no society I believe.

Oh! Madam, we never saw a human creature; my father had no visitors, and never went a visiting himself.

Knowing that this was a subject on which Fanny would innocently expatiate, without considering its imprudence, I mentioned my beloved Sophia and her aunt, who, I said, sometimes were so kind as to enliven our solitude with their visits, and in whose company my father had once been prevailed on to allow me to spend some weeks at the town of M—. I also spoke of Madame de Clarence, and did not forget Mr. Howard, who was indeed, though I did not own it, the only male visitor my father has had in my memory, Mr. Benfeley excepted, whom I scarce recollect.

You, my Sophia, was a new source of investigation and curiosity. Who was this Miss Beaumont? where had I got acquainted

acquainted with her? When I answered that she had been my favorite friend at the convent, that we had received our education together, and that she was only daughter and heiress to Sir Edward Beaumont, whose name and public employment could not be unknown to her, I assure you my importance seemed not a little encreased by the information.

The appearance of the gentlemen, I was in hopes, would have relieved me from this embarrassing conversation: but Lady Farnford was determined it should not drop so soon.

My dear, cried she to her husband, these ladies have been entertaining us mightily. They have been telling us all about their manner of living abroad; and that the old gentleman their father was of a most singular and extraordinary humour. He hardly ever allowed of the young ladies leaving home, and never permitted a man to enter his doors.

This

This speech, which implied that we had been complaining of this last circumstance as a peculiar hardship, put me extremely out of countenance, and instantly drew the eyes of the gentlemen towards us: but Mr. Howard relieved my awkwardness by saying that Mr. Seymour was indeed uncommonly fond of retirement, yet at the same time so warmly attached and indulgent to his children, that he would most willingly have allowed them what society they chose, had not their duty and affection induced them with pleasure to conform to a way of life which they knew was agreeable to his taste.

What could his intention be Miss, said Sir Jonathan, addressing himself to me, in burying you alive in that manner? Certainly he never could expect to get you off his hands at that rate; at least his method was rather extraordinary. For my part I think it is a piece of injustice

justice to shut up girls like birds in a cage. Let them see and be seen, and take their chance in the matrimonial lottery like others: one must not expect now-a-days that our daughters will be courted by proxy on the report of their beauty. There's Betsey now—I hope to live to see her happily settled; but I should not think I performed my duty to the girl, if I shut her up always at home, where she would have no opportunity of making a good creditable settlement.

It was not easy to find an answer to this speech, which was entirely addressed to me, and I did not attempt it. I felt however for his daughter, who I concluded must be equally shocked with its rude indelicacy; you may then guess my astonishment, when I heard her say, inwardly speaking, but without the least appearance of bashfulness——Indeed I should not think it at all fair.

The

The whole company staid supper; and as whist was the game, of which Fanny and I are entirely ignorant and we declined any other, Sir Jonathan and Lady Farnford and Mr. and Mrs. Hindon made a party; Miss Farnford, the Captain, and Fanny, having seated themselves on a sofa, soon after entered into chat together, in which Mr. Howard joined. As for me, I was placed by the card players; and though more in a contemplative than talkative humour, (for indeed I was anxiously revolving in my mind the success of the letter to Lady Linrose,) yet seeing Miss Jenny take up her work, and sit down at the farther end of the room as if unwilling to intrude on the conversation, I took that opportunity of testifying that I did not regard her in the mortifying point of view which seemed so unfeelingly to influence the rest of the company; and shifting my seat in order to join her, endeavoured to
conquer

conquer the distance and reserve with which she kept herself unconnected with those from whom she only expected delicacy and ill breeding.

She appeared much gratified with my attention, and received it with a degree of modesty which evinced she had not always been accustomed even to common politeness. We conversed together till supper was announced ; and I found something, both in her sentiments and manner of expressing them, superior to what I perceived in any of the rest of the party.

I am afraid my Sophia will conclude I am growing censorious upon entering the world ; but to an eye unaccustomed to a mixture of characters, and where all the errors and absurdities of society are entirely new, a thousand faults and imperfections must appear, which habit conceals and acquaintance renders too familiar for observation.

To

To this I make no doubt it is in a great measure owing, that I find myself so early disgusted by Mrs. Hindon's manners, for I own I am infinitely disappointed; probably the more poignantly from the sanguine disposition with which I first met her. We were strangers and unknown to her; and her benevolence in offering us an asylum bespoke such humanity and goodness of heart, that I instantly in my own mind adopted her for a friend, and received her first expressions of kindness with that gratitude and enthusiasm, which her civility undoubtedly still merits, but which it is now no longer in my power so warmly to bestow. First sight impressions I confess are extremely fallacious; yet I am much mistaken if Mrs. Hindon possesses either that delicacy or good sense, which, if they inhabit the mind seldom fail to throw some lustre over the manners, however unpolished

lished by society or a knowledge of the polite world.

I was particularly shocked by her behaviour to this poor girl. Nothing certainly discovers littleness of mind so evidently as insolence to inferiors, or to those whom calamities have rendered dependent on us: As we sat together, I expressed my apprehensions that our intended visit was the occasion of hurrying her away from Mrs. Hindon's sooner than was her original intention; but before she could reply, Mrs. Hindon overhearing me, answered—Oh never think of that, Miss Seymour. I dare say Jenny herself would be very unwilling to stand in the way of my convenience. We can easily procure her an apartment at Mrs. Bret's the mantua makers, for some weeks, and as we are at the expence of her lodgings, it is all one to her: besides it is just in the corner of the street, and she will eat here;

so that I give you my word the honour of your company will not occasion the slightest inconvenience. I only wish to have a day or two given me afterwards, that things may be made proper for your reception, and then I shall be quite affronted if you refuse to favour me so far.

The extreme grossness of this speech, which so unfeelingly discovered Miss Jenny's dependance, made her hang down her head in confusion; and I felt her mortification so severely, that I insisted on remaining in our present lodgings in preference to occasioning her removal.

Mrs. Hindon however soon contrived to carry her point by rendering me quite incapable of arguing on the subject. You don't consider, my dear Miss Seymour, cried she, how scandal flies in this town. What will not people say to see two fine young girls of your figure residing in lodgings, without the protection either
of

of a father, a husband, or a brother. I make no doubt but that Mr. Howard here would be exceedingly happy to act in the capacity of one of these relations; but till he proves his title, added she, (laughing immoderately at the confusion into which both her brother-in-law and we were thrown by this hint) you'll be charitably taken for a connection of a different kind.

Mr. Howard even blushed at her indelicacy; but said, with an air of mingled dignity and gravity, that he should be happy in performing any services to us which might manifest his friendship for my father, and the sense he should ever possess of the obligations he owed him.

There I don't doubt you, returned Mrs. Hindon, smiling with a sly look, and I hope the young ladies may rely on your good offices upon *their own account* as well as their father's.

I flatter myself they do, said he, with
a mild

reserve, though much embarrassed by his facetious sister in law's ill judged raillery.

Before we departed, Lady Farnford and her daughter came up, and expressed in warm terms their good fortune in having been introduced to our acquaintance, hoped it would prove the forerunner of a cordial intimacy, and assured us they should not fail to wait on us as soon as it was in their power.

Mrs. Hindon, who is indeed extremely kind, tho' I could wish it were attended with a little more softness, called again this morning, and was hardly seated when Lady Farnford and her daughter were announced.

The latter on entering hastily brushed by her mother, and shaking both Fanny and I by the hand with the familiarity and freedom due to old acquaintances, exclaimed—I am quite happy to see you

both. I assure you mama has done nothing but praise you so as you can't think since last night, and we ordered the coach as soon as we had done breakfast, in order to wait on you, to request that you would favour us with your company to the play, if you are not engaged on Wednesday next. Mrs. Siddons is to appear in Belvidera. All the world will be there; and as we have engaged places, I hope you will certainly accompany us.

Lady Farnford joining in the request, we consented, altho' I do not much wish to appear in public, till we know on what footing we are to be introduced.

To-day we have spent at home, and entirely by ourselves, which the two ladies regretted as a calamity their politeness would undoubtedly have prevented, had not previous engagements put it out of their power. Mr. Howard has been from home too most part of the day, employed

ployed I believe about our affairs with Mr. Benfeley's executors.

EIGHT IN THE EVENING.

Mr. Howard is just come in. With his accustomed kindness, he has been making enquiries I find respecting the situations and dispositions of our nearest relations, with the view of being enabled to judge from which of them we are likely to receive the most cordial reception. But tho' he does not wish to raise a prejudice in our minds against my uncle's family, he has been constrained to acknowledge, that with the exception of his second son, (who is high in the world's estimation,) they are not generally beloved.

Tho' of acknowledged probity and honor, a vain passion for state and parade obscures their good qualities, and renders

their society so shackled with ostentatious ceremonials, that it is very little either courted or desired. Lady Linrose in particular exacts an homage on account of her rank, which is beheld with ridicule and granted with reluctance, of course out of a very general acquaintance she enjoys the blessing of but few friends.

My uncle and her Ladyship, it seems, had lived separate for some years previous to his death. He was a man of a very violent, untractable disposition, and his lady possessed not that mild compliance of temper that could submit to the headstrong humour of her husband. Lord Belmont, it is said, approved of and even advised the separation, and has preserved for her Ladyship a respect and regard which leads the world to exculpate her from the share of blame that usually in similar instances involves in some measure both parties.

Lady Ann Vere, my father's only sister,

ter, Mr. Howard is told died about a twelvemonth ago. She had buried her husband some years before, and has left no family. Her loss is particularly unfortunate at this juncture, as she is said to have been of a very amiable character, was extremely attached to my father, and partially beloved by Lord Belmont.

L E T T E R VI.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

DECEMBER 8.

HAVING dispatched my last packet, Fanny and I were preparing to leave the parlour the other night, it being late, and Mr. Howard having already retired to bed, when the door was suddenly opened

and two young men, seemingly intoxicated and disordered, hastily entered the room, as if quite at home. Upon seeing it occupied, they asked pardon for their intrusion. They did not however attempt to repair it, by leaving the apartment, but stood some minutes endeavouring to excuse themselves on the score of having mistaken it for another, which it seems one of them at present inhabits in this house.

The wildness of their looks, and the elaborate length of their apology, led me instantly to suspect that the mistake was not unintentional, especially as the part of the house which we have taken is perfectly distinct from that engaged by other lodgers. I recollected besides that I had more than once remarked, since our abode here, that as we passed on the stairs a face from the door of one of the rooms used to peep out as if anxious to get a sight of us, and concluded, from the behaviour

haviour of these gentlemen, that knowing there were two young women under the same roof with them, they had been seized with curiosity to see us, and in a state of intoxication had ventured to introduce themselves in this rude and abrupt manner.

Frightened by the bold way in which they stared at us, I curtsied with a very grave air, and told them the mistake was of no consequence, expecting them to depart. This however they had no intention of doing so immediately.

Since Fortune has proved so kind, said one of them, who appeared the most intoxicated, since Fortune has so wonderfully favoured us with the knowledge that two such angels exist, let us not fail to profit from the blest occasion. Permit me the honour ladies of introducing this gentleman to the happiness of your acquaintance, (pulling his friend by the arm, who, half ashamed of his situation, had

had shrunk behind)——Tom Bradshaw, Ma'am, (bowing,) he is modest you may perceive, but as worthy a fellow as lives.

My embarrassment and astonishment at this effrontery in an utter stranger may easily be conjectured. I knew not what reply to make to a speech and behaviour so unaccountably forward and presuming, but stood with a surprise and gravity in my countenance sufficient I hoped to have confounded them, had they been capable of confusion after such a frolic.

Come Tom, continued he, do me the same favour with the ladies: introduce me to these divinities, who have kindly condescended to inhabit this our terrestrial abode.

His companion however, whose faculties were either less impaired or who did not naturally possess that degree of happy assurance with which the other seemed blest, becoming now thoroughly sensible of the error he had committed, and heartily

tily ashamed of his friend's behaviour, exclaimed—This is too much, Jack; let us be gone. Ladies, I am perfectly ashamed—I blush—to have—to have intruded so rudely; and stammering out a very awkward apology, endeavoured to disengage himself from his friend, who held him by the arm, swearing that he would not suffer him to leave the ladies so abruptly.

Terrified at the bustle they began to create, I hastily exclaimed, for heaven's sake gentlemen leave us. Consider we have not the pleasure of knowing you. I then looked around in vain for the bell, but perceived there was none in the room, and I was too much intimidated to dare acknowledge my fears, by making an attempt to escape, which would probably have proved fruitless, as they had shut the door and stood themselves almost before it.

Fanny,

Fanny, tho' in general rather timid, could not witness this scene without feeling more entertained than frightened. The extreme absurdity of the two gentlemen's conduct, and the awkwardness of my astonishment, struck her so forcibly, that in spite of her apprehensions she could not resist giving way to a violent and childish fit of laughing; the bad consequences of which soon appeared so evident, as to put a speedy period to mirth so mal apropos.

Nay if you are for a frolic ladies, cried the gentleman who had hitherto preserved the most decorum, suddenly turning round and joining heartily in the laugh, I'm your man.

Oh! cried the other, I knew they were dear little kind devils, and advancing to Fanny, was going to throw his arms around her, when a sudden emotion of uncontrollable terror made us both utter at one instant a loud scream and fly to the door,

door, which the gentlemen were too much intimidated to prevent our opening; and the landlady and Therese both appearing, they retired in haste to their own apartment, while Fanny and I, breathless with fear, did not for an hour recover our usual composure.

Mrs. Brumpton, our landlady, who is a decent, sensible looking woman, then informed us that only one of the gentlemen lodged in her house, and the other, who by our account of his audacity she assured us could not be Captain Bradshaw, was one of his friends who often visited him.

Her lodger, she said, was a gentleman of the best character, sweet tempered, and extremely generous, and had never been guilty of such a riot in her house since he had lived with her; she therefore imagined his present freedom must have entirely proceeded from inebriety, as indeed the other gentleman his friend was
but

but too much given to that fault, and might have led him into it, and she was certain Captain Bradshaw would be quite distressed when he reflected on his misbehaviour to two *such ladies*.

She afterwards added, that having got a glympse of us one day on the stairs, he had been so much struck, as she called it, that he had often entreated her to contrive some means of seeing us for a longer time, but that she had told him that was a favour he must owe to chance alone, as she could not presume to introduce him.

I told Mrs. Brumpton that intoxication, (a bad apology for any transgression,) afforded no sort of justification for rudeness like his, and that I should most undoubtedly take effectual means to prevent a repetition of the same offence, by applying next day to Mr. Howard, who would talk to the young men on the subject without delay.

This

This was less my intention at the time than meant as a threat to be repeated from Mrs. Brumpton's lips to her lodger ; tho' I had resolved, in the heat of my resentment, not considering the consequences, to inform Mr. Howard of our affront and to request his interference : but a moment's reflection had changed this resolution ; and the good woman represented so strongly the risque attending engaging two gentlemen in a quarrel, that I determined never to mention it to him unless I had reason to dread the continuance of a similar conduct.

Next morning our landlady brought us an apology couched in the most respectful terms, from the Captain, entreating our forgiveness for our last night's alarm. As I was somewhat afraid of his encroachments after such audacious behaviour, we took no further notice of his message than to tell Mrs. Brumpton that while her lodger made no attempts
to

to force himself on our acquaintance we should think of the past no more.

All yesterday and the day before Mrs. Hindon was confined with a bad cold, yet she was so kind as to request our company; but we declined it, from the idea that politeness alone could have induced her when ill to solicit it.

Adieu my love.

H. SEYMOUR.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

